THE HISTORY OF THE MARCHIONESS DE POMPADOUR.

10662.de.16

Le Normand d'Etioles (J. A.)

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OF THE

MARCHIONESS

DE

POMPADOUR.

PART the FIRST.

The SECOND EDITION corrected.

LONDON:

Printed for S. HOOPER, at Ceſar's-Head, the corner of the New-Church, oppoſite to Somerſet-Coffee-Houſe, in the Strand. MDCCLIX.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

HISTORY

OF

Madam de POMPADOUR.

THE Public having long ranked amongſt its objects of curioſity, the hiſtory of a perſonage who has acted, and continues to act, ſo diſtinguiſhed a part in the world, as madam de Pompadour; the follow-

ing account of her is offered towards its ſatisfaction. No tedious introduction is here prefixed to prepoſſeſs the reader in its favor. To the execution itſelf it is left to decide on the degree of credit that it may deſerve.

This celebrated lady's father, or reputed father's name, was Poiſſon, butcher to the Invalids. Sometime after he was married, he fell under the cognizance of the law, and was hanged in effigy for a rape; himſelf having, by flying the kingdom, eſcaped perſonal execution. There he ſtayed till he obtained his pardon at the interceſſion of Madam de Pompadour, or at leaſt on her account.

Her mother, who was one of the moſt beautiful women in France, did not, in the abſence of her huſband, deliver herſelf up to a vain barren affliction. That ſhe might not want for conſolation, ſhe pitched upon two declared gallants at once, publickly known to be her keepers; Monſieur Paris de Montmartel, and Monſieur le Normant de Tournéan, both in great employments in the revenue. A woman capable of having thus two men at her ſervice at the ſame time, is not ſuppoſed too ſcrupulous to have more, though leſs openly. It is certain however that Madam Poiſſon paſſed for being extremely free of her favors. Whilſt her huſband was abſent, ſhe was brought to bed of a

daughter, who is now the famous Madam de Pompadour. Chronology could ſcarce be tortured into affording the leaſt reaſon to imagine that this rare production was the work of her abſent huſband. Meſſieurs Paris and le Normant being the moſt apparent of her lovers, were competitors for the honor of a paternity, that, perhaps on a ſtrict examination, would have come out to belong to neither.

Madam Poiſſon however had, it ſeems, her reaſons for preferring Monſieur le Normant to the other. She perſuaded him, that he was actually the father of the child. As a proof that he was perſuaded, he took, to the

utmoſt, a farther's care of it. Being bred under his eye, and particular direction, there was no accompliſhment procurable omitted for her education. Dancing, muſic, ſinging, painting, were all beſtowed upon her, and ſhe had talents for them all, joined to an air that graced them all. Nothing could be more amiable than her perſon, or than the ſprightlineſs of her temper. Had not Monſieur le Normant been prepoſſeſſed with the opinion of her being his own natural daughter, her beauty, and even the pains he had taken to form her, and the ſucceſs of thoſe pains, could not have failed to endear her to him. His fondneſs for

her grew to ſuch a height, that in due ſeaſon, he began to think of providing for marrying her, in a manner that ſhould ſhow he conſidered her, in not a leſs light than that of a legitimate daughter.

Amongſt a number of conqueſts her growing beauty had made, was that of the young Monſieur le Normant d'Eſtiolles, nephew to the perſon who had thus acted the father's part by her. His acceſs to the houſe, his familiarity on the foot of ſo near a relation, had procured him repeatedly the ſight of the young Poiſſon. Nor could he ſee her with impunity. The charms of her perſon in the firſt ſpring of her

bloom, the graces of her air, and the accompliſhments of her education, had entirely ſubdued and captivated him. As his views were honorable, the difficulty was not to break the matter to his uncle, the fair's ſuppoſed father, but to his own; whom he could not expect to find very reconcilable to a match, againſt which there were ſo many objections.

Theſe indeed the uncle, on the overture of his nephew's paſſion and intentions, from his fondneſs for the young Poiſſon, ſoon got over, as to himſelf. The point was now to bring over the young gentleman's father. This was not an eaſy matter. At

length however Monſieur le Normant prevailed, through the efficacy of his offers, the main of which was to lay down half his fortune, for the preſent, and to ſettle the other half at his death, on his ſon. The fear of theſe advantages, going with the ſuppoſed daughter, into another family, joined to the paſſionate ſolicitation of his ſon, induced his father to hearken, and at laſt to cloſe with this propoſal. The young pair were married, and Mademoiſelle Poiſſon was now Madam d'Eſtiolles.

It does not however appear that her heart had been greatly conſulted in this match. Monſieur le Normant d' Eſtiolles had not the moſt engaging per-

ſon, being rather diminutive, ill-favored, and upon the whole a very mean ordinary figure. Yet if any thing could atone for the want of perſonal merit to touch the heart of a lady, he muſt have been maſter of her's. The lover did not ſink with him into the huſband. As he was very eaſy in his fortune, there were no expences in dreſs or diverſions, ſpared that might prove his paſſion for her. Though ſhe had charms enough to make a lover, and eſpecially a huſband-lover with his figure, jealous; he indulged her in all the liberty ſhe could wiſh. He aſſembled and entertained at his houſe the beſt and moſt agreeable company that Paris afforded, and of which herſelf

was the life, from her gayety, and not the leaſt ornament, from her beauty.

Amongſt the numbers that reſorted to her houſe, many were drawn there by deſigns upon her; and as they had the double-facility of declaring themſelves, from the manners of the French, far from being unfavorable to gallantry, and from her ſprightlineſs, which was far from diſcouraging, they did not long deny themſelves the eaſe of acquainting her with their ſentiments.

Amongſt theſe was the abbot of Bernis, now actually miniſter of ſtate, and in fair proſpect of a Cardinals hat.

The firſt foundations of his fortune, were then undoubtedly laid by his paſſion for this lady, who, tho' ſhe did not think fit to gratify it in the way he deſired, preſerved a gratefull remembrance of it when ſhe came into power. It was by her interceſſion he was firſt named ambaſſador to Venice, and by rapid degrees, her patronage procured him his preſent advancement. Yet he was originally no more than of an obſcure family, in Pont St. l'Eſprit, a little town of Languedoc, on the borders of Venaiſſin. Nor was himſelf known at firſt but by ſome little verſes, moſt of them in praiſe of his fair Madam d'Eſtiolles; and in which, though they did not want for a cer-

tain eaſineſs of compoſition, there was certainly too little merit to have got him a place in the Royal Academy, if his patroneſs had not made a point of it. But if his genuis for poetry was not held a very ſuperior one, his talents for politics were ſtill leſs ſo. Nor has the public hitherto entirely approved of Madam de Pampadour's promoting this old Celadon of hers; poſſibly from its thinking it much eaſier to make him a miniſter than a ſtateſman. But be that as it may; he and a number of others ſighed for this lady, who, by the indulgence of her huſband, was delivered up, at it were, to their courtſhip; and ſighed in vain. For, though the world has far from

ſpared her character, ſince her ſucceſs, or rather fall with the french King, it is generally agreed that before that, ſhe had gone no farther than mere coquetry, to the prejudice of the faith due to her huſband. It is true, ſhe gave no lovers that offered, abſolute repulſes, but ſhe granted no particular favors to any of them. The moſt preſſing ſhe put off, with ſaying, "that "if ſhe ever wronged her huſband, it "ſhould not be with any one but the King." All of them laughed at this, and perhaps at that time, had reaſon to imagine, that the jeſt would never be realized into an earneſt that does ſo much honor to the Italian proverb: "If you will be Pope, take it ſtrong-

" ly into your head that you ſhall be " Pope."

Though this declaration of hers had nothing more than an air of gaiety, the diſpoſitions ſhe made were not the leſs ſerious. She had deſigned the conqueſt of the King, and was determined to omit nothing conducible to the atchievement of it. One of the King's favorite diverſions was known to be that of hunting. She pretended to her huſband, a fondneſs for it herſelf; to which he was far from having the leaſt objection. Having then procured a riding-habit, the moſt exquiſitely imagined, as in taſte ſhe ever excelled, for working the

deſigned effect, and ſtriking the blow ſhe meditated, ſhe managed ſo as to attend the King conſtantly in his hunting-parties, not as one of the court indeed, but as ſimply a ſpectatreſs of the ſport.

Thus ſhe contrived to throw herſelf in his way, as often as poſſible. But all would not do. She had the mortification to find herſelf at the expence in vain of ſo many attractions, and advances. The King however could not paſs unobſerved ſo beautifully conſpicuous a figure, but then it was without any emotions of love or deſire that he had taken notice of her, and had even aſked who ſhe was.

But ſhe did not eſcape the piercing eyes of a rival, and a rival ſo much in poſſeſſion of the King's heart, that it was at that time ſhut up againſt the impreſſions of any other fair. This was Madam de Mailly, daughter of the Marqueſs de Neſle. She had taken notice of Madam d'Eſtiolle's affectation of attending the chace, of her way-laying, as it were the King, and playing off her charms in his eyes; ſhe had been alarmed with the enquiry he had made concerning her; and, to cut ſhort any views ſhe might have of ſucceeding by a perſiſtence in her deſigns, ſhe, with all the authority of a favorite, ſent her word, that the beſt for her, was never to appear

at any hunting-party of the King's again. Madam d'Eſtiolles, who was in no condition of life to meaſure with Madam de Mailly, thought herſelf obliged to obey the intimation. Thus, for that time, her pretentions were, if not at an end, at leaſt ſuſpended.

As this ſuſpence makes an interval in her hiſtory, it may not be improperly filled up with a ſummary account of the French King's gallantries; an account that is even ſo neceſſary to the clear comprehenſion of the whole, that it can hardly paſs for a digreſſion.

Lewis the XVth had, at a very tender age, being only turned of fifteen, been married to Mary the daughter of Staniſlaus Lecſinſki, ſometime King of Poland, now Duke of Lorrain; ſhe was ſeven years older than himſelf. With this Princeſs the King lived for a number of years, in a moſt exemplary ſtrain of conjugal affection, even though the match had been made, as thoſe of his rank generally are, without conſulting in the leaſt his inclination, or ſo much as the likelihood of its ever being ſo. The perſon of the Queen had never been extreamly engaging. The diſparity of years, though indeed not a great one, could not ſtill be but of

ſome conſideration. A numerous iſſue atteſted however the union that reigned between them, and ſeemed to enſure its duration. The King bred up by Cardinal Fleuri to ſtrict notions of conjugal fidelity, did honor to his preceptor in the ſcrupulous obſervance of them. Habit too joined to confirm what duty had begun. The Queen had beſides a thouſand good qualities that might have compenſated for any perſonal defects. It is probable that for a long time the King had not ſo much as a rambling thought to her wrong. He had even pretty ſmartly rebuffed ſome of thoſe courtiers, who mean enough to ſeek that advantage from the vices of a

King, which they have not to hope from his virtues, had attempted to ſeduce him. To one of them who was with that view, extolling to him the charms of a lady of the court, "what! ſaid he ſharply, do you think "her handſomer than the Queen?" The courtier had not a word to reply, he was ſo choaked with this anſwer.

Such conſtancy was not made to ſtand eternally proof againſt the power of example in ſo corrupt a court. Ten or twelve years however were paſſed before the King gave any ſigns of wearineſs, or inclination to rove. It is ſaid the Queen's perſon had with

her growing years, and frequent child-bearing, contracted a coldneſs or indifference unfavorable to the claims of love. The diſproportion of age alſo began more and more to ſhew itſelf. But with the regard the King had for her, as the common parent of his children, as well as for her excellent temper, and unaffected piety, it may be believed that he did not eaſily, nor without many conflicts with himſelf, depart from his ſyſtem of juſtice to her bed. But when he had once burſt the bars that held him, and yielded to the calls of his conſtitution, which was naturally an amorous one; he, like a torrent that had been before

reſtrained by its banks, overflowed all the fields of licentiouſneſs.

In the midſt however of the moſt unbounded alienation of his perſon from the Queen, he always preſerved inviolable the tendereſt regard and eſteem for her. It is true, that from a ſpirit of moderation, ſhe rarely intermeddles ſo much as to aſk any favor; but whatever ſhe aſks is granted without heſitation, and with the beſt grace imaginable. Her conduct then, has rendered her not only the darling of the people, but even of the court itſelf, where virtue has not always that juſtice done to it, which the ſuperiority of hers compells from it.

When the King firſt began to give a looſe to his inclinations, and to talk of his will and pleaſure to have them gratified, in the tone of a maſter that would be obeyed, the Cardinal Fleuri was ſoon apprized of it. This old, ſupple, refined courtier, knew the world, and eſpecially the temper of his pupil too well, to think he would brook reſtraint in a point, where few men are capable of ſuffering any. He would indeed have wiſhed it otherwiſe, but thought it moſt prudent to connive at it, and even under-hand to direct where the ſtorm of the royal appetite ſhould fall, which having at that time no determinate object, but the ſex in general, he judged the

King's buſineſs was with the readieſt. Upon this plan, he ſaid, " *He! bien donc, qu'on faſſe venir la Mailly.* " Well then, ſince it muſt be ſo, let la Mailly be ſent for." La Mailly was accordingly ſent for, and la Mailly came. Few ladies at that court would have refuſed to pick up the Royal Handkerchief, or rather not have ſcrambled for it.

The King however was ſo pleaſed with her, that he kept to her for ſome time. Nor did ſhe but deſerve it. No miſtreſs ever made leſs advantage of a royal gallant. She was generous to exceſs. No favors ſhe obtained from him, were for herſelf. Charita-

ble, good-natured, affable, and obliging, ſhe repaired in ſome meaſure, by a number of virtues, the blemiſh of her honor.

So far from pillaging him, ſhe received the little preſents he made her with great reluctance. Amongſt others, the King one day, ſent her a pair of gold candleſticks, at which ſhe laughed, and only ſaid, his Majeſty ought not to have forgot the ſnuffers: and this ſhe ſaid, more becauſe ſhe thought it pleaſant, than from any cravingneſs. When he left her, ſhe threw herſelf into a deep devotion, died in a convent, and died inſolvent. So little harveſt had ſhe made of her favor.

But if the King quitted her, it was only for a ſiſter of hers. There were five of them, all daughters to the Marqueſs de Neſle, Lauraguais, Mailly, Vintimiglia, la Tournelle, and Flavacourt, all of whom became his miſtreſſes, in their turns (and ſome of them at one time) except Madam Flavacourt, the handſomeſt of them, to whom the King had a great inclination; but her huſband was ſo rude and unpoliſhed, that he preſerved her only by telling her, that ſhe might if ſhe pleaſed, play him falſe, but that no King on earth ſhould hinder him from ſhooting her through the head, if ſhe did. This ſingle exception however did not hinder the old gentleman

their father the Marqueſs de Neſle from ſaying, "that ſince his Majeſty "had lain with his whole family, "there remained only himſelf for him "to conſummate the honor upon."

Madam de Vintimiglia, who was the next, had a ſon by him, that was covered by her being married.

To her ſucceeded Madam de Tournelle, who died, as it was at leaſt generally believed, by poiſon. The King had, at the inſtances of his confeſſor, during his ſickneſs at Metz, renounced any further commerce with her. But this extorted reſolution laſted no longer than till his health returned. The lady received aſſurances of a renewal,

but did not ſurvive the reception of them above two or three days; being taken off as it was ſuppoſed, by ſome who imagined they had reaſon to dread her reſentment, on her return to favor.

As to Madam de Lauraguais, another of the ſiſters, ſhe had had only a tranſient part in his affections, and in the courſe of her employ of confidante to the intrigues of her ſiſters with him.

All theſe paſſions were now over, either by death or ſatiety. An interval ſucceeded, in which the King, no longer attached to any particular miſtreſs, reſolved to try the charms of variety; to which he even ſacrificed

delicacy. He had women brought him, from amongſt all orders of the people, not excluding the loweſt, or what they call *grizettes*. By this laſt we underſtand here ſuch nymphs as are ſcarce above the form of a ſtuff-gown, checked apron, and colored handkerchief. In this way he was chiefly ſerved by Richelieu, one of the gentlemen of his bed-chamber, who having apartments at Verſailles, made *petits ſoupers* at them, where he invited his maſter, and introduced to him ſuch objects as he thought would pleaſe him. He was however ſometimes diſappointed of the acceptance of his catering. Of this there were two remarkable inſtances, in the two famous ladies, Madam de la

Popelinere, and Madam de Portail. The King would touch neither of them. The firſt, though ſhe had great wit, he thought too affected. The other, though very handſome, appeared to him to have ſomething too mean, too vulgar in her air, which was perhaps the more glaring for its ſo little aſſorting with the richneſs of her dreſs. Had ſhe been in a plain jacket and pettycoat, ſhe might have ſtruck his taſte more.

But as I have given the epithet of famous to theſe ladies, thoſe readers who are already acquainted with the reaſon why they are ſtyled ſo, will, I preſume, forgive a ſuccinct digreſſion

in favor of thoſe who are not ſo well informed as themſelves.

Madam de la Popeliniere had been an opera-girl, and was taken off the ſtage by Monſieur de la Popeliniere, a rich farmer-general of the revenue, who married her. Upon which, probably thinking, ſhe could not make too much haſte to puniſh him for ſo great a folly, ſhe gave a looſe to gallantry. Richelieu however was at the head of her liſt of favorites. He had hired a lodging at a tapeſtry-weavers, contiguous to her apartment, with which there was contrived a communication by a door in the chimney, that was concealed by the back of a high

grate. This myſtery was detected on the firſt quarrel of the lady with her maid; and the poor huſband, inſtead of taking meaſures for concealing his diſgrace, in the heat of his reſentment, publiſhed it with all the circumſtances that could make him ridiculous. At Paris the laughers are rarely on the ſide of the unfortunate ſpouſes. The ſcheme of the chimney was thought ſo pleaſant, that it did honor to Madam de la Popeliniere to whom the invention was attributed. Her name became ſo famous that it was given to various things. It was a faſhion to have caps *a-la-Popeliniere*, ribbons, hoops, fans, and ſo forth *a-la-Popeliniere:* and not improbably ſome had chimnies *a-la-Popeliniere.*

As to Madam de Portail, wife of the preſident de Portail, her interview with the King, though not puſhed the length ſhe could have wiſhed, a failure ſhe attributed to the exceſs of reſpectful love with which ſhe had inſpired him, produced an event pleaſant enough. Pretty, but ſilly and vain, nothing could perſuade her but that ſhe had made a compleat conqueſt of the king, and that nothing but an opportunity was wanting for him to give the finiſhing ſtroke to it. In this idea, at a great and general maſk-ball, ſhe ſingled out one who by his air, make, and even voice, had reſemblance enough to the King, to excuſe her miſtaking him. She had plucked off her maſk,

and began to teize and provoke him. He who knew her, and who was only of the King's guards, humored the miſtake; but humored it ſo far that he took all the advantages of it that he could deſire. Nothing was refuſed him. After which, ſhe returned to the company ruffled enough in all conſcience, and heartily pleaſed with her adventure, in the notion of its being the King, with whom ſhe had been engaged. Her exultation did not laſt long. The guard who did not think himſelf greatly bound in gratitude for a favor not deſigned for him, and thought the jeſt, too rich a one, to be ſunk upon the public, followed

her into the ball-room, and only told every one he met, his good-fortune. The lady's confuſion was compleat. This very ſtory is related with more humor and more at large, under fictitious names, in the *Bijoux indiſcrets*. The Lady however, ſometime after, fell into a much worſe ſcrape. She was accuſed of having conſpired with her cook and porter to poiſon her huſband. This charge was not indeed puſhed the length of a legal trial, that might have ended fatally for her: nay, the huſband was willing to ſtifle the affair, but Madam Pompadour, who owed her a grudge for having had deſigns upon the King; worked underhand ſo effectually, that ſhe procured

a *Letre de cachet* to ſhut her up cloſe priſoner in a convent, on the ſtrength of the preſumptions againſt her. But here Love took charge of her releaſe. There was one D'Arboulin, wine-merchant to Madam Pompadour, who was making a great fortune in that quality. He had been in love with Madam de Portail, and now hoped he ſhould have a better chance with her in her diſtreſs, than he could have flattered himſelf with, in her proſperity. In this view he exerted his intereſt with Madam Pompadour, whoſe reſentment was by this time, in ſome meaſure appeaſed, and who could now have nothing to dread from a woman ſo thoroughly cruſhed; and by her

means obtained Madam de Portail's diſcharge, who being ſeparated from her huſband, rewarded her deliverer to his wiſh, and lived with him openly.

Such were two of the ladies, who had the honor of being preſented, and the mortification not to be accepted by the King. But after running the common for ſome time, he began to be diſguſted at once, with the facility and variety of the women brought to him, which he found rather perplexed, than ſatisfied his taſte for pleaſure. In this mood, one night, as he was going to bed, he mentioned the unpleaſingneſs of his ſituation to

one Binet, a valet-de-chambre then in waiting. He told him he was heartily tired with new faces every day, and ſtill with-out meeting with any woman worth his attachment, which he ſhould prefer to this range through the ſex; and aſked him if he knew of any one he could recommend in particular, that had merit enough to relieve him from the trouble and diſguſt of changing ſo often. Binet, to whom ſuch a confidence was highly welcome, aſſured the King, that he had a perſon in his eye for him, that he was ſure would pleaſe him, and was a couſin of his own, and that beſides, ſhe had a real paſſion for his Majeſty's perſon. This piqued the King's curioſity to aſk him who it was:

and who ſhould it be, but the very individual Madam d'Eſtiolles, and now Madam Pompadour. Binet then proceeded to remind him that he had ſeen her, at his hunting-parties, and had even taken notice of her. The King recollecting her perfectly, and owned that he had liked her, as much as one then engaged with another could. He added, that he ſhould be glad to have a private interview with her, if it could be conveniently managed.

Binet now had his cue, and the next day, poſted to Madam d'Eſtiolles, and acquainted her with what had paſſed. She received the ſummons with rap-

ture, and meaſures were immediately concerted for her lying out, without incurring the ſuſpicion of her huſband.

At the time appointed, ſhe waited on the King, who paſſed the night with her, and the next morning diſmiſſed her cooly enough. Nor did he ſo much as mention her name to Binet, either the next day or for many days afterwards. It is eaſy to gueſs at the vexation of the confident, and eſpecially of the miſtreſs who had depended ſo much on the power of her charms, and who had now ſuch reaſon to think that the enjoyment of them had not left impreſſions on the King's memory, favorable enough to reſum-

mon deſire. Above a month paſſed in this manner, when one night, the King ſmilingly aſked Binet, what his couſin thought of him? His anſwer is eaſily anticipated. He told his Majeſty ſhe was full of nothing, thought of nothing, dreamed of nothing but him. "To ſay the truth, ſaid the "King, I was afraid ſhe was too like "the reſt of thoſe I have had, either ac-"tuated by ambition or, perhaps, by "yet a more ſordid paſſion, that of in-"tereſt. Otherwiſe, I cannot but ſay, "I had liked her very well. I had a "mind too to try how ſhe would "take my neglect." Binet was not ſo little of a courtier, intereſted eſpecially as he was in the iſſue of this affair,

not to give his Majeſty all the aſſurances fit to revive his inclination, and to quiet his doubts. He obſerved particularly that intereſt, or at leaſt ſo low an one, as that of a common hireling, could not have a great weight with her; ſince ſhe was ſo eaſy in her fortune, and that to his knowledge, ſhe had always expreſſed a paſſion meerly for his perſon. "Well, ſaid "the King, if you really think ſo, I "ſhall be glad to ſee her again." That point was eaſily adjuſted. The ſecond interview took place, and had not the like conſequence as the firſt. She now captivated him to ſuch a point, that he was uneaſy till he ſaw her again. And ſee her he did, night

after night, till at length ſhe had ſo far compleated her conqueſt, that he attached himſelf entirely to her.

It is generally thought, that this her ſucceſs was partly owing to the inſtructions of her mother; a woman perfectly ſkilled in all the myſteries of gallantry and arts of pleaſing. Theſe inſtructions were ſeconded by a happy aptneſs in the daughter to profit by them. Madam Poiſſon died ſoon after ſhe had ſeen the thorough eſtabliſhment of her daughter's favor; and at which perhaps her overjoy contributed to ſhorten her days.

In the mean time, the frequent night-eclipſes of Madam d'Eſtiolles,

could not but alarm her huſband, with whom her confidence in the greatneſs and power of her royal gallant, made her hardly keep any meaſures. He was ſoon apprized of his misfortune, and of the author of it. As he loved his wife too ardently to ſhare her with any one, the diſcovery was like a thunder-clap to him. Reſolved however not to acquieſce in it, he began to ſpeak in the tone of a perſon that was deeply wronged, and to exert the authority of a huſband determined to be no longer ſo. This only haſtened a meaſure already concerted between the King and Madam d'Eſtiolles. She now boldly plucked off the maſk, and ſure

of protection, ſhe hoiſted the flag of defiance, and repaired openly to Verſailles, as to her refuge. Poor d'Eſtiolles thus robbed of his wife, naturally made the world reſound with his complaints, and was even taking effectual meaſures for getting her back, when he received a *Lettre de cachet*, baniſhing him to Avignon.

Forced to obey, he went to his place of exile, where ſtill diſtractedly fond of his wife, his violent agitations threw him into a fever, that made his life deſpaired of. He recovered however, by the ſtrength of his conſtitution, and the advice of his friends, repreſenting to him the folly of throwing

away his life, for the ſake of a falſe, ungrateful woman, that would only rejoice at it. He ſtaid about a twelfmonth at Avignon, when time and reflection operating a due effect, he grew more reconciled to his fortune. He then made intereſt to be recalled to Paris, which he obtained on the promiſe of a paſſive acquieſcence and of a nonreclaimer of his wife, now firmly fixed in the King's affections. To this favor, if ſuch it may be called, were added advantages conſiderable enough to make him eaſy; if fortune could compenſate the loſs of the perſon one loves. He had places and employments to the amount of more than four hundred thouſand livres

a year, beſides gratifications for favors he ſhould aſk for others, which were ſure to be granted him. Though he never ſees his wife, they correſpond amicably together by letters; and when Madam de Pompadour uſed to go formerly much to plays (which ſhe now rarely or never does) he received, and ſtill receives, previous intimations of her deſign, that he may keep out of the way; one reaſon for which, was to avoid the attention of the audience to their countenances on ſuch an occaſion. Another reaſon might be, her own confuſion at the thoughts of meeting the eyes of a man once ſo near to her, and whom ſhe had ſo cruelly injured.

D'Eſtiolles, ſince his return to Paris, finding himſelf thus deprived of a wife, as ſoon as his paſſion for her had cooled and ſubſided, thought himſelf at full liberty to purſue elſewhere the indulgence of an appetite, he could no longer lawfully ſatisfy. On this plan, which he might adopt the readier in the hopes of ſtunning his painful reflections, he plunged into the moſt diſſolute courſe of life. Amply enabled by his fortune to gratify his taſtes, he kept a number of miſtreſſes, and the opera-girls eſpecially had the benefit of his involuntary kind of divorce. Being ſatisfied that all his diſorders would be placed to the account of his wife, as being originally the

cauſe of them, he might even out of revenge, take the greater pleaſure in multiplying them.

In the mean time, Madam d'Eſtiolles who had thus quitted her huſband, and an only daughter ſhe had had by him, then a child, and was now the King's declared miſtreſs in all the forms; had been ſucceſsfully employed in rivetting the chains of her royal lover. Abundantly provided with art, ſhe had thoroughly ſtudied his temper, his humors, his inclination, and ſo perfectly conformed to them, that ſhe fixed him to her, by creating in him, a deſpair of finding another woman, with whom he could be ſo eaſy and happy.

From the vivacity of her penetration ſhe ſoon felt out the King's weak ſide. She ſoon diſcovered, that of all the faculties of pleaſing of which ſhe was miſtreſs, none would have greater power to hold him faſt, than that of amuſing him.

Kings have more hours of dulneſs than other men, from their having early exhauſted, the whole chapter of pleaſures, through the facility of their coming at them, and the courtly aſſiduity of numbers, conſtantly employed, in ſpringing them for them. By this means before they are half-way through life, few diverſions can have the merit of novelty to them. It muſt be a

great genius for invention, that can procure them the ſatisfaction of it: and a greater one yet that can give to pleaſures palled by repetition of enjoyment, the grace of novelty, from the art of conſtantly varying and reproducing them under a new form, and with higher ſeaſoning. In both theſe points of novelty and variety, Madam d'Eſtiolles was ſovereignly the King's woman. Conſtitutionally impatient above all of the yawns of dulneſs pining for amuſement, he could hardly have found another ſo capable as herſelf, of filling thoſe diſmal inſtants of vacuity, with which he was ſo miſerably embaraſſed. To all the graces of her perſon, and her acquiſitions from

education, was added, that art ſo neceſſary at courts, the art of trifling. The verieſt bagatelles had the power of pleaſing by her knack of treating them. No-body could tell a ſtory or relate the little daily adventures of the Court and Town with more humor or a better grace. She ſung, ſhe plaid upon moſt inſtruments in a maſterly manner. She danced with all the lightneſs and air of a nymph, of which ſhe had all the delicacy and freedom of ſhape. But that in which ſhe excelled was, the exact adapting the diſplay of theſe accompliſhments to the call of the moment. Nor did ſhe but take particular care to have done with them, the inſtant before the one in which her

exquiſite diſcernment taught her they would ceaſe to be agreeable. Thus by preventing wearineſs, ſhe was ſure not to loſe the merit of all the entertainment ſhe had precedently afforded. So many talents for pleaſing, joined to the elegance of her taſte, amply qualified her for filling the poſt of a Petronius Arbiter at that Court. No pleaſures were thought ſuch that had not the ſtamp of her contrivance, or the ſanction of her approbation. All of them were required to be *a-la-Pompadour*. At thoſe *petits-ſoupers* of which the King is ſo fond, where laying aſide all the ſtiffneſs of ſtate, and unlacing royalty, he enjoys himſelf with a few ſelect, rather at that time companions

and friends than ſubjects, no one more than ſhe contributed to animate the company, and to keep up the ſpirit of joy in it. She was the vital principal of thoſe little parties. The King, in ſhort, had ſo many reaſons to feel that ſhe was neceſſary to the pleaſure of this life, that he had no temptation to an inconſtancy he was aware would create a not eaſily reparable gap in it.

Deeply impreſſed with a grateful and tender ſenſe of all that ſhe was to him, he thought no marks of it too much for her. The Bourbons have been often known to be expenſive through oſtentation, and ſometimes laviſh through love, but generoſity was never their at-

tribute. The preſent reigning one, is no exception to this general character of his family. Naturally parcimonious he had not very royally rewarded the favors of former miſtreſſes. It was reſerved for the ſuperior influence of Madam d'Eſtiolles to unlock the ſluices of his liberality, and they were poured out in a full flood upon her and hers.

He preſently gave her a marquiſate, with the title of the Marchioneſs of Pompadour.

Her father, who ſo probably had only that name, from his being married to her mother, had obtained his pardon, and now an ample proviſion for life.

Poiſſon, who was her brother, at leaſt by the ſafe ſide, and remarkable for nothing but for being her brother, was created Marqueſs de Vandiere, on which the courtiers, playing on the word, called him *Le Marquis d' Avant-hier*, which may be neareſt, though not literally, tranſlated by *the Marqueſs of yeſterday*. The ſenſe is hereby pretty well retained, though with the loſs of the pun, a loſs that will hardly be eſteemed a great one. Yet trifling as the jeſt undoubtedly was, it was probably to elude the ſting of it, that he ſoon after took the title of Marqueſs de Marigny, in virtue of a Marquiſate of that name he had by the King's bounty been enabled to purchaſe. He had

before been made ſuper-intendant of the King's Buildings, Gardens, Arts, Academies and Manufactures, a poſt of great importance and emoluments. All which favors could bring no great dignity with them, conſidering the nature of the intereſt through which they came. The good-man Poiſſon, the father, could not help ſaying, "As to "my daughter, ſhe has wit, ſhe is "pretty, ſhe may deſerve the King's "notice: but as for his doing ſo much "for ſuch a worthleſs blockhead as "my ſon Charles, in good faith! it is "unpardonable."

But even the King himſelf, with all his fondneſs for the ſiſter could not re-

frain his raillery upon this upſtart brother of her's. As ſome of his court were talking before him of the next promotion to the blue ribbon, and naming this young *Poiſſon* as one that was expected would be included in it, he ſaid, *Non! c'eſt un trop petit Poiſſon pour le mettre au bleu.* "No! he is "too ſmall a fiſh for blue ſauce." Thoſe who do not underſtand French enough to know that *Poiſſon* is a *fiſh*, and that *mettre au bleu*, is one of the ways of dreſſing the larger ſort in France, will loſe the jeſt entirely, which however can hardly but be the King's own. So bad a one as it is, had it been any one's elſe, it could never have been thought worth repeating.

The King was now entered with her into the giving ſtrain, which might be one of the reaſons to him, as it is to many others, for continuing to give, eſpecially to low perſons, with whom, without that continuance, all the merit of what was before given is preſently loſt. One gift then became only the pledge and wiredraw of another. But conſidering the diſproportion of his profuſions to the object on which it fell, it could not but have rather the air of the weakneſs of a paſſion than of the royal virtue of generoſity. It was a river poured down a ſink.

His privy-purſe was entirely at her command, of which ſhe profited with-

out meaſure or mercy. For beſides the expenſiveneſs of the ſyſtem of life into which ſhe had engaged him, ſhe drew from him what ſums ſhe pleaſed, independent of the unbounded traffic ſhe made of her favor and influence, by her procurement of employs, poſts, jobs, and other beneficial emanations from the royal authority. It has been averred, and not without ſome color of probability, that by this means, ſhe has accumulated a prodigious fortune, part of which is ſaid to be lodged in moſt of the banks of Europe. Part of it is more apparent as being employed in buildings and purchaſes of lands.

She purchaſed a palace at Paris, called the Hotel d'Evreux, near the Thuil-

leries, which as not being good enough for her, ſhe pulled down and built almoſt anew from the ground. This did not cauſe a little heart-burning to the Pariſians, at ſeeing the palace of a Prince converted to the uſe of a King's miſtreſs, and that miſtreſs taken, as it were, from the lees of the People. When the placard or frontal inſcribed with the name of the old Hôtel was taken down to make room for the new one of Madam de Pompadour, there were a thouſand paſquils, virulent couplets, and ſarcaſms ſtuck on the walls of the buildings, expreſſing the ſenſe of the people. Nor was their rage a little exaſperated by the circumſtance of a large parcell of ground being, on this occaſion, taken in towards enlarging the

gardens, out of the *cours*; a place ſo called from its ſerving for the nobility and gentry's taking the air in coaches, much as was once the faſhion here at the *ring* in Hyde-park. This they looked on as robbing the public, and though it was authorized by the royal grant, it did not hinder the mob from gathering and inſulting the workmen, at their work of raiſing the walls that were to encloſe this encroachment. Nor could they have gone on with it, if a detachment of the guards had not been poſted to protect them.

She had alſo acquired a ſuperb Hotel at Verſailles, not for herſelf, for ſhe had apartments in the palace itſelf, but for her numerous retinue.

The King beſides gave her the royal palace of Creſſy for her life, which occaſioned great murmuring amongſt all orders of people, at the indignity of ſuch a miſ-application of a part of the Domain.

He alſo, on a fancy that ſuddenly took Madam de Pompadour, built her a magnificent ſeat or pleaſure-houſe, called *Bellevue*, from the delightfulneſs of the proſpect, which had, it ſeems, excited her deſire to have a houſe there, juſt on the road to Verſailles, near Seve, and Meudon. Here too, in order to form the gardens, ſeveral proprietors of of lands were deſpotically compelled to part with them, much againſt their

will, and at the price fixed on them. An oppreſſion that could not but aggravate the reſentment of a public, already not overpleaſed with the ſums ſquandered upon her.

But difficult as it muſt ſeem for a miſtreſs to be thus conſtantly receiving, and ſqueezing her keeper, without any ſign of a mercenary or intereſted diſpoſition eſcaping her, that difficulty, the ſuperior art and genius of la Pompadour conquered. Naturally of a ſupple inſinuating temper, joined to all the talents that go to the making a good comedian, a fine genius, in ſhort, for a court; any character ſhe choſe to act, coſt her too little effort, for that effort

to betray its being no more than acted. Her art was too refined to have its effects ruined, by letting itſelf be ſeen: all without having ſeemed to aſk any thing, ſhe obtained every thing. Never was the game of diſintereſtedneſs better plaid, without prejudice, be it underſtood, to intereſt. But if her love for the King was not a feigned one, or at leaſt much exagerated by her, ſhe was but the more juſtly accuſable of a meanneſs unknown to that paſſion where it is real, that of laying the perſon ſhe loved under unmercifull contributions, beſides taking the advantage of his weakneſs to draw things from him, that could not but be hurtfull to his reputation. Neitherhad ſhe, in excuſe of ſo groſs

an inconſiſtence, to plead ignorance. Of the nature of her own motives ſhe could not be inſenſible; and the loud voice of the public which could not but reach her, muſt have informed her of all the miſchiefs ſhe was doing him, if ſhe could herſelf be ſuppoſed not to know it. But ſhe had not, it ſeems, more of delicacy than juſt the ſurface neceſſary to ſave the appearances of her not wanting it at bottom; nor no love that could interfere with the gaining thoſe ends of the King, which ſhe never might perhaps have gained, if its being more ſincere, had left her leſs liberty of mind for the exertion of art. Sheer ſentiment and love for his perſon were the diſguiſe uſed by her; a diſ-

guiſe, which ſtale as it is, ſtill rarely fails, from the ſelf-love of the perſon on whom it is employed meeting the deception above half way. Kings above all men, are liable to this impoſition. One would think they were born to be the bubbles of every kind of flattery, that of others and their own. In point eſpecially of love, there is nothing of which they are ſo jealous as of their rank ſharing their ſucceſſes with their perſonal merit, and in nothing are they ſo apt to be egregiouſly deceived.

The King however proceded more and more intangling himſelf with Madam de Pampadour, not only, through habit, but from the favors he accumu-

lated on her, and which, with the uſual effect of favors, on the conferring ſide, endeared her the more to him. Verſailles, as every one knows, is one of the moſt ſuperb palaces in Europe, but proportionably the leaſt lodgeable, as if its magnificence could not have exiſted, but at the expence of its conveniency. Nothing can be leſs commodiouſly contrived than the diſtribution of the apartments, of which there is alſo a great ſcarcity. The Queen and daughters of France are not themſelves lodged extreamly at large; but even the principal officers of the court are wretchedly accommodated in that reſpect, ſome of them are forced to take up with *entreſoles* hardly ſuperior to

garrets. But the apartments of Madam de Pompadour are ſcarce inferior to thoſe of the King himſelf, being on the ground-floor directly under his; his bed-chamber communicating immediately with hers by a private back-ſtaircaſe, ſo that they can come to one another without paſſing through any outer-room.

In the mean time ſuch high marks of diſtinction, joined to ſo unbounded a profuſion, could not but create to the perſon on whom they were conferred, a number of enemies. Envy alone, at a court, would have operated that effect, and perhaps more ſtrongly yet, if the merit of the ſubject had contribu-

ted to exalt its virulence. But on this occaſion, there were many motives for diſcontent that might fairly be owned. If the ſcandal was not much at a court, familiarized to ſuch examples; the ignobleneſs of the object, and the exceſs of favors poured forth upon ſo obſcure a family, coul dnot but alarm and indiſpoſe many, but none ſo much as the moſt zealous well-wiſhers to the King. Even that inſipid herd of courters who ſcarce dare call their opinion their own, enſlaved as it is to a maſter from whom they receive orders what it ſhall be, had that pride of theirs, which is ſo conſiſtent with the utmoſt meanneſs, hurt by their being obliged to creep to a creature of fancy, late ſo

much their inferior. Not daring however to ſpeak out, they revenged themſelves of the reſtraint, by redoubling their ſecret deteſtation and contempt of her, and of all her noble family at her tail. The diſſatisfaction, in ſhort, was general, and Madam de Pompadour, even in the infancy of her power, and before her aſcendant was ſo well eſtabliſhed, as it ſince has been, had like to have been the victim of the riſing ſtorm. As the occaſion was extreamly ſingular, and made a great noiſe, at the time, it cannot be improper to particularize it here.

There was one Madam Sauvé, wife to a clerk in the office of Monſieur d'Argenſon, ſecretary at war: ſhe was

a ſubaltern to Madam de Tallard, governeſs to the Duke of Burgundy the Dauphin's eldeſt ſon, then an infant.

On a particular day, that this young Prince was ſhown to the people, who came in great concourſe to ſee him; this Madam Sauvé was in waiting. The child was placed in a cradle on the inſide of a baluſtrade, to defend it from the inconveniency or danger of the croud, preſſing too cloſe upon it. As ſoon as the room was cleared, Sauvé approaching the cradle, as ſhe took the Prince out, gave a ſkream, occaſioned by a packet ſealed up, which ſhe ſaid ſhe found there. It was directed to the King, and being delivered to Madam

de Tallard, the Governeſs, ſhe immediately carried it to him. On being opened it was found to contain ſome grains of corn, alluſive to the ſcarcity that then reigned; and a letter full of bitter expoſtulations with the King on his miſ-government, and on his ſcandalous attachment to la Pompadour; not without threats even of a ſecond Ravaillac, if he did not reform his conduct and take more care of his People.

The King was greatly ſhocked at this, not ſo much from the tenor of the letter itſelf, as at the manner of its conveyance.

La Pompadour knew herſelf deteſted by Monſieur d'Argenſon amongſt

others. He had been ſo careleſs of concealing his ſentiments of her, or rather ſo open in the declaration of them, that the wonder was, how he could hold his place, as it were in defiance of her power with the king. Her ſuſpicion then inſtantly landed upon him, which ſhe did not fail of communicating to the king. Nor were there wanting circumſtances to countenance it. D'Argenſon's enmity to her was manifeſt. Madam Sauvé was not only the wife of one of his clerks, but was ſuſpected of being his miſtreſs. In ſhort, ſhe ſo far inclined the king to believe that he was at the bottom of this miſtery, that he threw out hints of the deepeſt reſentment againſt d'Argenſon.

But the very broaching this ſuſpicion againſt a miniſter in ſuch high credit had like to have been fatal to her own favor. The Queen, the miniſters, almoſt the whole Court, in ſhort took ſide againſt her. It was but one cry with them, that the whole affair was an artifice of her own, executed by ſome obſcure agent of hers, and levelled at a man who had had no fault, if it could be called one, but that of thinking no better of her than ſhe deſerved. The King even with all his partiality for her, was ſtaggered with the unanimity and vehemence of the clamor againſt her.

Madam Sauvé, who had found or pretended to find the packet, had been

narrowly examined. Her anſwers had only increaſed the perplexity. Interrogated how it was poſſible for ſuch a thing to be conveyed into a cradle defended by a baluſtrade, on the inſide of which herſelf ſtood near it, without her marking and ſeeing the perſon; ſhe replied, that ſhe had felt her hand ſqueezed at the inſtant ſhe ſuppoſed the packet was ſlipped in, but that in ſo great a concourſe, ſhe looked on it only as an action of ſome perſon willing to approach the cradle as near as poſſible, or perhaps thruſt involuntarily towards her, and catching at any thing to ſave himſelf: and that even had ſhe been aware of any thing extraordinary, the motion was ſo quick, and

the croud ſo fluctuating, that ſhe could neither diſtinguiſh perſons nor faces.

To this is was oppoſed, that ſo ſtrange a circumſtance as that of having her hand ſqueezed, could not but alarm her enough to cry out on the inſtant, which it ſeems ſhe did not, even if ſhe had not the preſence of mind to diſtinguiſh the perſon, and to call the guards, at hand, to ſecure him.

This however might have paſſed, if her ſubſequent conduct had not ſtrengthened the growing ſuſpicion of her being concerned in the fact. The very night of the day on which this accident happened, as ſhe was going to bed, ſhe told her maid, that ſhe was

ſure that the perſon who had convey-ed the packet into the cradle, would never be eaſy, till he had her life, from the apprehenſion he might be under that ſome time or other, ſhe ſhould know him again, and have him ſeized: that ſhe ſhould ſpare him the trouble of making away with her, and herſelf all further terrors about it, by taking poiſon. The maid ſaid every thing ſhe thought proper to diſſuade her from ſo wild and cauſeleſs a project, and La Sauvé pretended to have renounced it. But as ſoon as the maid had left her, ſhe ſwallowed ſome poiſon, but not in a doſe ſufficient to diſpatch herſelf, which does not indeed appear to have been her intention. What poiſon

however ſhe had taken, working ſome effect, ſhe groaned and cried out ſo that the maid returned, who finding what ſhe had done, alarmed all within call. Upon this, proper help was immediately ſent for, and counter-poiſon enough given to her, to defeat the effect of more than ſhe had really taken. Any danger of her life then was ſoon out of the queſtion. But there appeared in all this ſomething ſo overacted, ſo much of grimace, that the ſuſpicions thickened againſt her. She was accordingly taken into cuſtody and ſent to the Baſtile, from which ſhe never came out. Nor is it known what examination ſhe underwent in that priſon of the ſtate-inquiſition,

what tortures were uſed, what diſcoveries were made, or whether ſhe was privately executed or not. What is certain is, that ſhe has not been heard of ſince. Her huſband Suavé had fled on the firſt notice of her being apprehended, but returned ſome time after, on being amply juſtified. It may be preſumed however, that D'Argenſon was intirely innocent, ſince the cloud that had hung over him was preſently diſpelled, and himſelf, at leaſt to all appearance, reſtored to the King's former confidence.

But if la Pompadour was any ways guilty, as it would be perhaps too great a refinement of conjecture whetted by

prejudice, to ſuppoſe ſhe was, the ſmothering the proceſs againſt la Sauvé, and her own continuance in favor, could only be accounted for by that prodigious aſcendant ſhe had obtained over the King, who might not therefore be willing to expoſe or to puniſh her, and had not the power to renounce her. Such a weakneſs, however, is ſo incredible, eſpecially as it muſt be joined to ſo much injuſtice, that one would of the two, rather incline to think la Pompadour innocent, on this occaſion, of the ſcheme imputed to her.

But as if this ſtorm had only ſhaken her to fix her the firmer, no ſooner was

it blown over, than the King appeared more infatuated with her than ever. The court was ſoon given to underſtand the extent of her influence. She alone could make fair or foul weather in that region. No offence was more ſeverely reſented, than any mark of diſreſpect to the woman whom the King delighted to honor.

She had alſo more than a common cauſe of triumph and ſelf-congratulation for having put the conqueſt of the king on a ſolid footing, by the diſcovery ſhe had made of the only effectual way there was for her to preſerve it.

It is a great pity that for the eaſe and happineſs of ſociety, that ſecret of

her, provided it ſhould not be, like hers, abuſed, was not more common in practice than it is. Whatever danger however the men might be expoſed to from it, the women could not but be gainers by it, and fail of its effect it really could. This ſecret then, was no other, than on hitting the King's particular humor, by ſtudiouſly conforming to it, to make him find a greater pleaſure in her company than with any one, or any where elſe. Neither are great beauty nor great wit ſo requiſite to ſecure this point, as the wiſdom of ſacrificing to complaiſance that ſelfiſh ſpirit, from which, and that moſt commonly in trifles, in little humors, and ſilly paſſions, one's own ſatisfaction

is preferred to that of others. A ſacrifice oftenest ſure to be repaid with more laſting and much greater advantages than that of what is vulgarly called, and more vulgarly practiſed, having one's own way.

Of the ſoundneſs of this theory, la Pompadour, was, by the having adhered to it in practice, enabled to boaſt a victorious experience. She had not lived many years with the King, in quality of his miſtreſs, in the moſt extenſive ſenſe of that word, before ſhe was diſqualified from diſcharging what is commonly thought the moſt eſſential function of it. A female diſorder had grown upon her to ſuch a

height, that the king was forced to abſtain from any intimate approaches to her, by the advice of his phyſicians, who repreſented them, as not even exempt from danger to his health. Difcult as it might be to the King to wean himſelf from her embraces, no conſtancy of deſire could however well be proof againſt this double infrigidation of her perſonal infirmity, and of the fear of its conſequences to himſelf. In this critical ſituation it was, that la Pompadour had to triumph on her not having ſolely truſted to any thing ſo periſhable as the attractions of her perſon. She was now to reap the benefit of her having taken care to ſecure her hold, by ſuch a multiplicity of chains, that even ſo great

an one ſnapping, could not reſtore him to his freedom. The whole court, and not improbably herſelf, were ſurprized to ſee ſhe could keep poſſeſſion of the King, in circumſtances ſo fit to cool and diſguſt him. Many motives however, might concur to fix him; his predominant paſſion for amuſement, by none ſo well gratified as by her; the old circle, with princes, of favor begetting gifts, thoſe gifts ſtill greater favor, that favor again further gifts, and ſo on to the end of the chapter; habit; the ſpirit of contradiction, finding a kind of joy in diſappointing the concluſions of numbers; the ſingularity of the thing; and perhaps, above all, that falſe pride of the human heart, ſo often breeding

a perſiſtence in errors, from the renunciation implying a confeſſion of them, and by which it is ſo ſilly as to be grievouſly hurt. All theſe weakneſſes, for ſuch they all are, combined together might without too much occaſion for wonder, account for his not having ſtrength enough to break looſe. No ſymptoms of remiſſion betrayed ſuch a deſign. On the contrary, he now appeared more enſlaved than ever.

Monſieur de Maurepas, who had, among others, preſumed on this accident to her perſon, operating its moſt probable effect, was one of the firſt victims of this opinion. He was not only a miniſter of ſtate, but one of the

moſt highly favored ones; having been as it were bred up with the king, and taken into the adminiſtration before he was ſcarce of age. Upon a certain feſtival that la Pompadour had ſent the king the compliment of a noſe-gay of white roſes; this circumſtance was, amongſt the news of the day, told to Maurepas at his levee. On which he laughed and ſaid, "he had never thought "otherwiſe than that ſhe would, ſome "time or other, make his majeſty a "preſent of *white flowers.*" Coarſe even to indecency, as this alluſion was, it was eagerly caught up by ſome that were preſent, and ſoon re-ecchoed thro' the court. The thought was verſified, and the lines were fathered upon Mau-

repas. No outrage could have been more ſtinging, nor more perſonal to la Pompadour, who incenſed at it beyond meaſure, had influence enough with the king, to make him enter into her reſentment.

Maurepas loſt at once, both place and favor, moſt probably for ever, no part of the king's character being more eſtabliſhed, than that of his never returning to thoſe he has once left. Chauvelin, a very capable miniſter, and purely in complaiſance to cardinal Fleuri, by him diſmiſſed, though he had a great eſteem for him, had been before one inſtance of that inflexibility of his. Not even Chauvelin's plainly proving after-

wards, how greatly in the right he had been, could ever procure a revocation of his diſgrace.

But as it was neceſſary to give ſome color to ſo violent a ſtep as that of diſcarding Maurepas, and as the true motive of it could not well bear being told, a pretext was ſet up of ſome malverſation and negligence of his in the marine department. But the public, admitting there was ſome truth in the charge, conceived only the more indignation at ſo good a reaſon's not having produced that diſmiſſion which was reſerved for a compliment to la Pompadour's private pique and animoſity. So true it is too that, in courts, men are

not ſo often the victims of their vices as of their virtues, and a hatred for la Pompadour paſſed for one.

Neither was this the only, by many, examples of the danger of offending her. Monſieur de Reſſelier, a knight of Malta, and officer in the guards, had wrote four virulent lines, in which taking her for his text, he had ſo little ſpared the king's weakneſs for her, that his puniſhment for being the author of them, might have plauſibly enough been as much attributed to his having attacked his majeſty, as his majeſty's miſtreſs; had not the king himſelf openly made a merit to her, of his diſclaiming on this occaſion any revenge

but hers. The ſenſe of theſe lines was, "that a king who could debaſe him-"ſelf ſo much as to pick out the very "meaneſt object on the earth, for the "placing his affection on, could be "capable of nothing but meanneſſes." The ſuſpicion falling violently upon Reſſelier of his being the author of them, guards were ſent, at a time that he was from home, to his apartment, when upon ranſacking it, they found the original foul draught, blotted with here and there erazements, and alterations in his own hand, that proved the lines to be of his compoſing. Had there been only a fair copy found, though of his own writing, it would have been no proof, as he might have pleaded its be-

ing only a copy, or taken down upon memory. As it was, he was condemned to the iron-cage at Mount St. Michael, for life: a ſentence much ſeverer than that of death. For this cage, is a place in which the priſoner can neither ſtand upright, nor lie at his length, ſo that he has no poſture left for him but that of ſitting. In this irkſome condition he was detained ſeven years, and then had no mitigation, but what was obtained for him by the interceſſion of the order of Malta, through which he was tranſferred to the diſmal priſon of Pierre-Enciſe, but where he could however enjoy the liberty of his limbs. Here he had not been long before la Pompadour ſatisfied, as ſhe might well be with what he had ſuffered, piqued herſelf upon generoſity forſooth! and procured

his releaſe, with leave to return to Malta. His preferment in the army was loſt. It is ſaid, that before he quitted the kingdom, he waited upon la Pompadour to return her thanks; a ſtep that would almoſt rob him of the pity raiſed by all that he had endured. But what is there that may not be believed of the ſervility of the ſubjects of that nation?

But though la Pompadour was thus become, in a very material ſenſe, an invalid, and diſqualified for the king's chamber-ſervice; ſhe was not, it ſeems, capable of doing herſelf the juſtice of not being jealous of the king. Any ſhew or appearance of liking in him to another woman, gave her the greateſt uneaſineſs, though ſhe took care to conceal it from him. When madam de

Brionne came to court for the firſt time, and as it was imagined, not quite without deſign of pleaſing the king, he could not keep his eyes off her, and ſaid, with ſome emotion at ſupper before la Pompadour, that he did not think he had ever ſeen a more beautiful woman. This alarmed her, and to prevent the conſequences, in time, ſhe had a hint underhand conveyed to the Prince Charles of Lorraine, (not the emperor's brother) of the danger there was to be apprehended to the virtue of his nephew Monſieur de Brionne's, wife. The prince who was one of the old rigoriſts in point of honor, did not give himſelf a moment's reſt, till he had managed, ſo as to make his nephew hurry madam de Brionne from court immediately.

In the mean time la Pompadour not content with accumulating treaſures, with all the rapaciouſneſs natural to the condition out of which ſhe had been taken, the wife of a farmer of the revenue, began every day more and more to betray the meanneſs of her original, by exactly that ſort of pride and vanity which ſo ſtrongly characterizes it. There were no airs of inſolence ſhe did not give herſelf. With too much ſenſe not to be conſcious of every thing that was againſt her, ſhe had not however enough to ſee that the character of King's miſtreſs, repairing nothing, only made every thing that was againſt her more notorious: ſhe did not ſee that all the pains ſhe ſhould take to ſcrew herſelf up to a height above contempt would only make her the more inviting

mark for it. Theſe reflections were either above her making, or were ſubordinate to the native littleneſs of her paſſions.

It would be endleſs here to produce all the inſtances of her arrogance, that ſo often provoked the ſecret ſcorn and deriſion of the court, but of none more than thoſe who humored it, by their moſt court-like compliance. A few of the moſt glaring ones may ſuffize.

In proof of the high idea ſhe was grown to entertain of herſelf, and of her dignity, one point of ſtate ſhe took upon her, was the ſuffering no ſtool or chair beſides her own elbow-one in her dreſſing-room, where ſhe received company ſitting at her toilette. By ſpecial

grace, indeed, whenever his Majeſty did her the honor of a viſit, there was another produced for him. Or if Princes of the Blood, Cardinals, or ſome of thoſe very high perſonages indeed, on whom ſhe could not well hope to paſs ſuch treatment, as that of receiving them ſitting without offering them a chair, ſhe vouchſafed to admit them, herſelf ſtanding till they were gone. The Marqueſs de Souvrê however who was not, it ſeems, of that excepted rank, waiting upon her at her toilette, and finding no chair for his accomodation, very familiarly clapped himſelf down on one of the elbows of hers, and continued the converſation, lolling by the ſide of her; ſhe inwardly fuming and broiling all the while. This unparallelled outrage as ſhe conſtrued it,

ſhe inſtantly complained of to the King, who took the firſt opportunity of calling the Marqueſs to an account for it. "Faith! ſaid he, I was deviliſhly fa-"tigued, and ſeeing no where to ſit "down, I even made the beſt ſhift I "could," the cavalier eaſy air of his excuſe made the King laugh, and he being a kind of privileged favorite, hindered any further notice being taken. Otherwiſe he might have learned to his coſt, what it was to ſit upon the elbow of la Pompadour's chair.

She affected the princely air of having a gentleman-uſher. In this employ ſhe entertained one Monſieur Dinville, a nobleman of one of the beſt and moſt antient families in Guyene. This

puzzled the world to decide which was greateſt, her inſolence or his meanneſs.

She had in her ſervice one Collin, a kind of ſteward or clerk of the kitchen, whom, ſhe did not think of diſtinction enough to wait upon her in that capacity, unleſs his perſon was decorated with ſome Order. Such an idea would have entered into the head of few real born Princeſſes. This point ſhe ſoon carried, by her intereſt with the King, to have him made one of the comptrollers of the royal and military order of St. Lewis. This inſtitution was peculiarly deſigned for thoſe officers who ſhould ſerve with diſtinction, or acquire a certain title to it from ſeniority in the army or navy. Collin never known but for a menial ſervant, could not conſe-

quently have the leaſt qualification. But this office of comptroller, not indeed making him a knight of St. Lewis, has the ſame effect of giving him the privilege of wearing the croſs and inſignia of that order. So that to all appearance, and with la Pompadour appearance ever ſtood at leaſt equivalent to reality; ſhe may have to ſtand behind her chair, with a napkin tucked under his arm a knight of St. Lewis with his croſs dangling. If ſhe had taken a ſpite to the order and meant to explode it by ſuch a diſgrace, it was no bad way of effectuating it, juſt as the French government, to put down the faſhion of cal[illegible] ordered, upon a time, the hangman to wear them, in his office at the gallows.

Her arrogance ſtill increaſing with her favor, nothing would ſerve her but having the honors of the Louvre, which principally conſiſt in the privilege of the tabouret, or ſtool to ſit in the preſence of the Queen, and in being preſented to her to be embraced, which is the ceremony of inveſtiture. This was not very decent for la Pompadour to aſk, conſidering the light in which ſhe muſt ſtand to the Queen; who however out of her unbounded complaiſance to the King, made little or no oppoſition. Even the *Etiquette* or forms of the court very rarely indeed allowing this diſtinction but to dutcheſſes, gave way to the paramount favor of the candidate, whoſe pretention was more-over ſomewhat authorized by the precedent of Madam de Monteſpan, miſtreſs to Lewis the four-

teenth, who had obtained the like. It had alſo been urged, in mitigation of the objection to character, that ſhe no longer kept up any criminal commerce with the King, and that his converſation with her being now reduced to the purely platonic terms of friendſhip, any reaſon of that ſort for her excluſion ceaſed in courſe. The involuntarineſs indeed of all this innocence, no one was ſo uncourtly as to mention, as it would not have greatly fortified the argument in her favor.

The triumph however did not come pure and unmixed to her. In the midſt of it, ſhe met with one of thoſe mortifications, to which vanity is ſo lyable, and which ſubſcribe, at a court eſpecially, infinite rejoycing, when they do happen.

In the courſe of the ceremony ſhe was preſented to the Dauphin, to receive his ſalute. The Dauphin, who naturally enough deteſted her, as he tendered one ſide of his face to her to kiſs, lolled out his tongue, and winked with his eye, on the other. It was not poſſible for la Pompadour to ſee this, but ſhe was preſently after told of it. Burſting with rage, ſhe flew to the King, painted this treatment of her in all the lively colors her emotion could furniſh, and concluded with her being determined to leave the court rather than ſtay at it expoſed to ſuch intolerable inſults. The King incenſed at his ſon's procedure, which he conſtrued into an irreverence to himſelf, adopted her reſentment, and the next day as the Dauphin was diſpoſing himſelf to pay

the devoir of a morning-viſit to him, he received orders, to retire to his palace at Meudon. Upon this, the Queen, the miniſters, and numbers at court interpoſing; the King would however hearken to no interceſſion for a reconciliation, but on condition that the Dauphin ſhould perſonally go to la Pompadour, and in full circle diſown his procedure. He ſubmitted, and in a numerous preſence declared to her, "that the report that had been made "to her was a falſe one, and that he "had not in the leaſt behaved in the "manner that had been told her." She received this declaration like a moſt gracious princeſs, and anſwered him, with equal truth, that ſhe had not believed a word of the matter. Thus ended this not uncomic ſcene. But the

Dauphin was blamed by many, as having too much debaſed himſelf in ſuch an humiliation. They did not perhaps enough conſider his double duty of ſon and ſubject, ſo that what fault there was in this ſtep, could hardly at leaſt, be ſo great in him who obeyed, as in him who commanded.

La Pompadour having thus obtained the honors of the Louvre, this ſucceſs did not ſo much ſatisfy as encourage her to make a farther trial of her power. She, not long after, took it into her head to be *Dame du Palais*, or Lady of the Palace to the Queen; a place this, never given, but to ladies of the higheſt diſtinction for birth, rank and character. The Queen, as paſſive as her acquieſcence had been, in the affair of

the Louvre, muſt however have been void of all ſenſibility, if ſhe could have ſtomached her misfortune being as it were, brought home to her, by this obtruſion of a perſon ſo offenſive to her, into her houſehold. Yet conſonant to the whole tenor of her complaiſance for every thing ſhe knew was the King's deſire, ſhe made no objection, but ſuch an one as ſhe imagined, would be abſolved to him, by its affecting his honor and his conſcience equally with her own.

Waving then any other reaſons, that however juſt, might be only the more likely to diſpleaſe for their being ſo, ſhe repreſented mildly but firmly, "that it would be too crying an in-"decency for her to admit, a per-

" ſon into that ſtation who could not
" even approach the altar to take
" the ſacrament, whilſt in a ſcanda-
" lous ſtate of ſeparation from her
" huſband. That the circumſtance of
" the innocence of her preſent intimacy
" with the King, of which ſhe was
" ſatisfied, did not in the leaſt cure
" the wound in la Pompadour's re-
" putation, whilſt, though actually
" a married woman, ſhe lived as it
" were at large, and in defiance of
" the duty of a wife, to be no where
" but at her huſband's home. That
" his majeſty might certainly order
" as he thought fit, but that ſhe
" hoped for his own ſake, that he
" he would not put ſuch a ſlur up-
" on his royal houſe, as to bring in-
" to it, in a ſtation of ſuch nice honor,

"a perſon ſo much under the cenſure "of the church, as to be lyable to "a refuſal from it of the com-"mon benefit of the Eaſter-commu-"nion.

The King on the one hand tender of either urging the Queen too far, or of doing any thing that might too much ſhock eſtabliſhed rules; on the other, having nothing more at heart, than to ſatisfy la Pompadour, was terribly perplexed, and at a loſs for ſome expedient to ſalve or ſurmount this objection of the Queen's, of which he felt all the force.

The Queen adhered to it as the only one ſhe could have pitched upon, in which the captiouſneſs of ma-

lice itſelf could not diſcover the leaſt ſhadow of the cavil of jealouſy or offence to him.

La Pompadour, herſelf, with all her wit, was at firſt utterly poſed by this ſeemingly invincible dilemma. For if ſhe continued in her ſtate of divorce, which having been originally a criminal one, was ſtill irregular; ſhe durſt not preſent herſelf to the communion; for two reaſons; ſhe would have moſt probably repulſed in a manner not the moſt agreeable; and even had ſhe ſucceeded, it would not have paſſed but for a groſs and unpardonable ſacrilege, ſuggeſted by ambition and executed by irreligion.

That way then the door was barred againſt her hopes. If again ſhe returned to the little man her huſband, they were equally annihilated. The mere lady-wife of a d'Eſtiolles, could with no very good grace be a *Dame du Palais.*

Then the confuſion to which ſhe was expoſed by this diſappointment of a pretention ſhe was known by the whole court to have made, and the pleaſure ſhe beſpake that diſappointment giving her enemies; did not a little encreaſe her vexation. The king ſhared in it, the courtiers enjoyed it.

Yet inſuperable as this obſtacle appeared, la Pompadour at length found means to vanquiſh it. She wrote a letter to her huſband d'Eſtiolles, in the

true Magdalen-ſtyle, of which this was the ſubſtance; "ſhe aſſured him, that "ſhe had very ſincerely repented of the "injury done him, and of the diſorder "of her life. That all the moſt eſ- "ſential part of her wrong was ceaſed, "but that ſhe wiſhed all appearances "of it would ceaſe too. That being "determined to atone for her paſt, by "her future conduct; ſhe entreated "him to receive her again, and that "ſhe would thence-forward take care "to edify the world, by the union in "which ſhe would live with him, as "much as ſhe had ſcandalized it by "her ſeparation."

Whilſt ſhe was writing this letter, and before it could be ſent, the prince de Soubize went to d'Eſtiolles, and told

him, "that in about two hours time, "he would receive a letter from la "Pompadour, to the effect above re- "cited. That he was undoubtedly the "maſter of proceeding as he pleaſed, "ſince all authority was out of the "queſtion; as it was requiſite that his "anſwer ſhould be perfectly a free one: "but that as a friend, he would adviſe "him to reject the offer contained in "the letter. That in his acceptance of "it, he would certainly not make his "court to the king, and that therefore "it became him to weigh well what "he did."

To give the greater force to this counſel, he at the ſame time brought him the royal mandate for a very con-

ſiderable augmentation of his emoluments in the revenue.

D'Eſtiolles in whom time and reflection had long brought his paſſion to reaſon, and conſequently to great indifference, if not contempt for his wife; d'Eſtiolles, who could not but know what was ſo publicly known, the condition of her perſon, that rendered her as uſeleſs to him in one ſenſe as to the king, and who was beſides engaged with a number of miſtreſſes, would now have been very loath to take her back, even if he had not been ſo powerfully entreated and ſo well paid for not doing it. Not impoſſibly too, on finding the matter thus left to his option, he might not be ſorry to ſeize ſo fair an opportunity of being pleaſantly enough re-

venged on his majeſty, for his having taken away his wife from him, by leaving him ſo bad a bargain on his hands, ſince he ſeemed ſo fond of it, and which d'Eſtiolles had beſides now ſo good a right to call his refuſal.

He made no more objection to what was deſired of him, than what would at once make the greater merit of his compliance, and not provoke by too apparent a ſlight, a woman from whom he had ſo much to hope and fear. In ſhort, the prince of Soubize had reaſon to go away very well pleaſed with his ſucceſs in this noble negociation.

La Pompadour's letter came in the time mentioned to d'Eſtiolles's hand, and he anſwered it conformably to the

cue the prince had given him, or who father had dictated to him what he was to ſay.

" He began with congratulating her, " on her return to ſentiments more " worthy of her. He expreſſed the " higheſt regret of her ſeparation from " him, which had made a wound in " his peace too wide ever to be cloſed " again. That he heartily however " forgave the injury, but that he had " taken an inviolable reſolution, never " to cohabit with her again. That it " was ſuperfluous for her to expect it."

In ſhort, though the refuſal was couched in the politeſt terms of reſpect and eſteem, it was as flat and peremptory an one, as he could have wiſhed.

Armed with theſe victorious inſtruments, the copy of her own letter, and her huſband's anſwer, ſhe communicated them to all whom they might concern. "She was no longer in "fault.—She had it is true, been in a "wrong way, but ſhe was now a con-"trite penitent, and acquitted in courſe "for living from her huſband, by his "denying to receive her." Inſtead of one biſhop of that church ſhe might now have had twenty to give her the white-waſh of abſolution, and to adminiſter to her her Eaſter-communion.

In ſhort this farce in which religion was ſo palpably mocked, though it deceived no-body, had its full effect. The capital objection to her admiſſion into the Queen's train was now re-

moved, and the Queen herſelf, with her uſual condeſcenſion, deſiſted from any further oppoſition; ſhe only ſaid with a ſmile, "It was not proper "for me to give my reaſons, and they "have taken the advantage of that, "not to leave me my pretexts."

In the mean time all the well-diſpoſed at court groaned over this freſh inſtance of La Pompadour's power and inſolence in thus forcing herſelf upon the Queen. In other reſpects however, in juſtice to truth, it muſt be owned that ſhe always behaved with the utmoſt reſpect and obſequiouſneſs to her Majeſty.

In fact ſhe durſt not do otherwiſe. She knew too well that the King's

delicacy in that point was too great not to be ſhocked, at the leaſt ſhadow of offence ſhe ſhould give the Queen by any petulance, or airs of a miſtreſs.

She knew that all her favor would ſcarce be ſufficient to protect her againſt his diſpleaſure, on any juſt provocation of that ſort of which her Majeſty ſhould have to complain, and regulated herſelf accordingly. Thus paſſing art for nature, ſhe made a merit of ſelf-intereſt, and of what was, ſtrictly ſpeaking, rather the King's virtue than her own.

It has already been mentioned that before her intimacy with the King, ſhe had a daughter by Monſieur d' Eſ-

tiolles. Her name was Alexandrina, and the King was ſo fond of her, that the child uſed very naturally to call him her Papa.

He even took ſo tender an intereſt in her, that he very early turned his thoughts upon providing a match for her, and ſhe was with reaſon looked upon as one of the greateſt fortunes in Europe.

The firſt perſon on whom the King had deſigns for her, was the Duke de Fonſac ſon to the Duke de Richelieu. He propoſed it to the father, who being too thorough-bred a courtier to give his Majeſty a flat denial, waved it, by ſaying coolly, "that he ſhould conſult "the houſe of Lorrain about it,"

from whom he was deſcended by the mother's ſide. Such an anſwer was eaſily to be conſtrued as a polite equivalent to a refuſal.

It does not however appear but that the King had too much juſtice to reſent it, ſince the Duke continued in the ſame favor as before, and probably not the leſs eſteemed by him for his not having been tempted to embrace ſuch a miſ-alliance by ſo ſordid a conſideration as that of the fortune or even the favor tacked to it.

As to the girl herſelf, ſhe reſembled La Pompadour in more than one point. She was extreamly pretty, very ſprightly, and not a little aſſuming on the favor of her mother.

Yet, young as ſhe was, that might be more the fault of thoſe who flattered her, than her own. She was boarded and educated at the convent of the Aſſumption, where Mademoiſelle Charlotte de Rohan-Soubiz, daughter to the Prince Soubize, and ſince married to the preſent Prince de Conde, then was, with other young ladies of the higheſt diſtinction.

Alexandrina d'Eſtiolles, either from ignorance or preſumption, diſputed on ſome occaſion, precedence with this Princeſs. She was ſoon given to underſtand her error; but when her mother La Pompadour was told of it, ſhe did not ſeem to give up the point, ſince ſhe only ſaid ſlightly enough, "*Elle a manque de politeſſe*," "She "has failed in point of politeneſs."

This Alexandrina at the age of between thirteen and fourteen, died of the ſmall-pox, in the ſame convent, about the year 1754, juſt as her mother was negotiating a treaty of marriage for her with one of the Princes of the houſe of Naſſau, with what probability of ſucceeding is not ſaid.

To a heart ſo engroſſed as her's, with ambition, vanity, and love of money, it would probably be doing too much honor to ſuſpect there being much room left in it for nature. The king's taking's the tendereſt part in the affliction ſhe felt or acted for this loſs, and the hurry and agitations of a court ſoon diſſipated her grief. What ſhe might continue to feel longeſt, was her being now deprived of that plauſible excuſe

to the world and to herſelf, for her eagerneſs in accumulating immenſe riches, the having a child to provide for. But that it was, as it is in ſo many others, who plead the like extenuation of that odious vice, merely and conſtitutionally avarice for avarice ſake, this misfortue has rather proved, ſince it has not hitherto appeared to have robbed that paſſion, in her, of a ſingle wiſh or endeavour to ſatisfy it.

Her brother Poiſſon, or marqueſs de Marigny's, being the preſent heir-apparent of that prodigious fortune ſhe is ſuppoſed already to have amaſſed, would rather be a damp to her ardor for amaſſing, if it was not purely, in her, a ſelf-gratification.

For nothing is more certain, than that ſhe has a ſovereign contempt for him. For him to be very dear to her, he croſſes too much her views of vanity, in his natural unſuſceptibleneſs of improvement, in the impoſſibility ſhe ſees in him of gracing the advantages ſhe procures for him, and of doing her honor.

Conſtantly mortified at ſeeing him the object of the raillery of the court, and indeed, of the whole world, ſhe would, if his want of merit was not too glaring, willingly attribute the ſlights with which he meets, to that envy ſhe is weak enough to think her fortune excites, and which is rather a mixture of ſcorn and indignation, in all who conſider the firſt foundations

of her fortune and power, and her abuſe of them. As it is, ſhe thinks it a better air to join the laugh againſt him, and not to loſe, at leaſt, the honor of her diſcernment by defending him.

But it is nevertheleſs imagined ſhe will leave him all, or the greateſt part of her poſſeſſions, if but for no other reaſon than that loving no-body beſides herſelf, if ſo odious a ſentiment can be properly called loving one ſelf, the mere circumſtance of his being her brother, will be the caſting feather in the ſcale of her equal indifference to every one beſides herſelf.

To leſſen however, the ſhame of this diſpoſal of her fortune, in the proſ-

pect of any childen he might have more deſerving it, or to procure herſelf the enjoyment of her being the foundreſs of a family, ſhe has made ſeveral attempts to get him married.

But this has hitherto ſuffered invincible difficulties from her nicety of choice for him. It is true, that amongſt the indigent or un-noticed nobility, ſhe might perhaps eaſily find ſome with whom the conſiderations of opulence and favor, might overcome any repugnance to ſuch a miſ-alliance. But that would not ſatisfy la Pompadour's modeſt pretentions. It muſt be a family not only noble but wealthy and decorated with the higheſt orders, and greateſt offices in the ſtate, into which ſhe would vouchſafe to match her illuſ-

trious brother. Now ſuch are not quite ſo eaſily found, as ſhe may have imagined. Few of them are tempted to incur ſo thorough a ridicule as ſuch an alliance could not fail to throw upon them.

In the mean time he continues ſingle, but it is ardently to be wiſhed, that he may not too long remain unmatched, leſt all Europe ſhould have to lament the extinction of the auguſt houſe of Poiſſon.

END *of the* FIRST PART.

BRITISH MUSEUM 10 MY 72

THE HISTORY OF THE MARCHIONESS DE POMPADOUR.

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PART the SECOND.

The SECOND EDITION corrected.

LONDON:

Printed for S. HOOPER, at Ceſar's head, the corner of the New-Church, oppoſite to Somerſet-Coffee-Houſe, in the Strand. MDCCLIX.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE HISTORY OF Madam de POMPADOUR.

PART the SECOND.

IT Is now high time to bring upon the ſcene an adventure that, for its conſequences, may well be thought to deſerve ſpecial relation.

Some time after La Pompadour's infirmity had made her, in a certain ſenſe, unapproachable to the King; his perſon, if not his heart, was conſidered as offering a vacancy. Amongſt the fair ſex there appeared, on the ranks, a number of candidates for his election of the happy one to fill it. Nor were there wanting amongſt the courtiers, many who aſpired to the honor of recommending an acceptable object. One of the competitors for this honorable ſervice, a young nobleman produced to the King, as ſomething worth remark; a portrait in miniature, procured for that purpoſe. It was that of a young girl beautifull beyond imagination. The falling in love with a picture is an incident worn ſo thread-bare, by its having been employed in thouſands of novels and ro-

mances, that there could be no excuſe for giving this ſtory ſo much the air of fiction, as to inſinuate, that the king conceived any ſuch paſſion at the bare ſight of this portrait. It will not appear ſo incredible, that he ſhould juſt ſay, on conſidering the exquiſiteneſs of the features, and the beauty of the complexion, that it could be nothing but a fancy-picture, for that he did not imagine that throughout all nature, there could be found the original of it. The nobleman aſſured him, that the girl whoſe likeneſs the portrait preſented, was not only exiſting, but not hard to be had. This piqued the king's curioſity, and, perhaps, his deſire. He ſaid he ſhould not be ſorry to ſee her, if it was but to ſatisfy himſelf whether he was miſtaken or not. This

was hint enough to the nobleman, who immediately took care ſhe ſhould be brought to him.

The name of the young creature, who was ſcarce fourteen, was Murphy, She was born in France, but originally of iriſh extraction. The circumſtances of her family muſt have been the loweſt imaginable, ſince her ſiſter actually ſerved for a model at the Academy of Painters, and herſelf was deſigned to ſucceed her, in due time, in the ſame employ.

The king at the ſight of her readily confeſſed, that her picture had done her leſs than juſtice. Her extream beauty, the freſhneſs of a complexion, of which the compariſon to roſes would be a compliment to

the roſe, her ſpringing-bloom, her infant-graces, the air of ſweet timidity natural to that age, and yet encreaſed by the over-powering ſenſe of his preſence, that innocence he preſumed, and it is aſſured, that he found in her; all conſpired to excite deſires, of which there was no neceſſity for one of his rank to languiſh an inſtant for the gratification with one of hers.

He ſignified his pleaſure, and ſhe had been purpoſely brought to him, ready diſpoſed, and having had her cue to conform to it. Then it was that he enjoyed a feaſt of pure nature, a feaſt too good for a king. Since there are ſo few in that ſtation of life, but have their taſte too vitiated by all the falſe refinements of courts, to have

even an idea of beauty's being exalted by ſimplicity. Unhappy enough never to be acquainted with truth in any thing, their whole life is one dull miſtake of falſity for her, and in nothing more than in their choice of miſtreſſes. In theſe how often do they take the groſſeſt art and deſign for pure love; the nauſeouſly affected airs acquired by education, for improved nature; and rich cloaths, jewels, paint, and all the non-naturals of dreſs for charms above thoſe exquiſite ones of naked nature! We ſhall ſoon ſee that in the caſe of the young Murphy, this reflexion is not entirely an impertinent one.

She was now become the king's little miſtreſs in form, the eſſential part of the ceremony having been conſummated upon

her. He had however no mind to produce her openly at his court, though, if beauty could give rank, ſhe might have taken place of an empreſs. He was not aware, nor perhaps above fearing the raillery and ſneers, to which an air ſcarce poliſhed enough, the natural ſimplicity of her anſwers, and her childiſh ſtrangeneſs and admiration of every thing new to her, would probaply expoſe her. Neither could it indeed be expected, that ſhe would not be even unpleaſingly dazzled with ſo ſudden a tranſition from the deepeſt obſcurity to the ſtrongeſt glare of pomp and magnificence. At courts there are many things to giddy the head, and but few to touch the heart. The privacy in which he propoſed to keep his little novice, was rather a kindneſs to her, if he ſhould think fit

afterwards to bring her into public life, ſhe would by this means be broke into it by more tolerable degrees. As to La Pompadour, it could not well be thought, that, circumſtanced as things were between them, he puſhed his delicacy with regard to her, to the length of laying himſelf under any conſtraint of concealment from her: yet that has been ſaid, and not without ſome grounds of reaſon.

The point was now to procure ſome ſnug retired place at hand, and convenient of acceſs to the king, where ſhe might be kept under the care of proper perſons. But a place accomodated to all theſe ends, was not eaſily to be found. His good friend, La Pompadour, helped him out in this perplexity, to which ſhe added

the merit of not appearing to know that ſhe was helping him.

As there was not a motion made, nor a ſtep taken by the king, of which ſhe had not the earlieſt intelligence by her ſpies, and perſons of confidence near his perſon, ſhe was ſoon apprized of this new fancy. She could not but be prepared for ſome ſuch thing, and nothing was leſs fit to alarm her, than his thus picking out a raw unexperienced girl for his amuſing himſelf with, in the way that ſhe could not amuſe him herſelf. She had at leaſt nothing to apprehend from purely her head. So obvious was the fitneſs of this choice to calm any alarms of hers, at the king's engaging with another than herſelf, that it was by many believed to be of her own

ſuggeſtion, and even management. But in this ſhe was wronged. She had too much art and experience of things to contribute her miniſtry, to the proviſion of a miſtreſs for him. The dilemma was plain. If he ſhould like her enough to attach himſelf to her, ſhe herſelf was ſupplanted in courſe. If, on the other hand, his miſtreſs ſhould come to diſguſt him, he would have to reproach her with the badneſs of her choice for him. Beſides, that it would have ſhewn too groſs, too indelicate in her, to be active in ſuch a procurement. On the whole then, ſhe took a far better part. It was that of winking hard, and feigning ignorance.

Proceeding on this plan, upon being acquainted with the king's embarraſſment,

about getting a private convenient place for his new miſtreſs; ſhe took the firſt opportunity of letting him know, that ſhe was heartily tired of a ſmall houſe, for which ſhe had once had a great fondneſs. This was a ſolitary retreat that had been built for her, and was together with the gardens, taken out of that part of the park of Verſailles, neareſt to the road to St. Germains, which was another of the encroachments in her favor, that had given no ſmall offence to the public. She intreated his majeſty to relieve her from the care of it, and diſpoſe of it as he pleaſed; ſhe did not at the ſame time drop him a ſingle hint of her knowing that he wanted ſuch a conveniency, nor for what he wanted it.

If the offer publicly made in this manner, with ſuch reſerve of the reaſon of it, was not however a pre-concerted colluſion between them, for the ſake of ſaving appearances, the king could not but be ſenſible that La Pompadour muſt know what was no ſecret to the whole court. He gave her then, or affected to the world, to give her, double credit for her readineſs to oblige him; and for her diſcretion in the manner of it. Another leſs prepoſeſſed would have ſeen nothing in this her procedure, but the artifice of it, and that none of the fineſt ſpun.

He accepted however this her ſo well-timed reſignation of a place extreamly convenient for his actual purpoſe. It was commonly called La Pompadour's Her-

mitage. Imagination can hardly figure to itſelf, a more delicious retreat. The moſt rural ſtyle was preſerved through every part of it. The houſe itſelf was a ſmall, unſhowy building, much in the manner of a farm-houſe, with a dairy on the back of it. Every thing for uſe or ornament of the inſide, expreſſed a ſweet neatneſs and a noble ſimplicity. No expence had been ſpared to embelliſh it, that could take place without prejudice to propriety. Every thing breathed a country-air. The paintings, all of the moſt maſterly hands, preſented nothing but gay landſchapes, paſtoral ſcenery and country-revels on the Green. Little images of ſwains and nymphs were properly diſpoſed, with here and there, for the contraſt-ſake, that of ſome hoary hermit. The apart-

ments were furniſhed and hung with nothing but with the fineſt and moſt lively colored Chintz that gave them a cool airy look.

The Gardens, without being laid out in frigidly ſymmetrized compartments, had nevertheleſs an imperceptibly regular variety. There was in one part of it a large boſquet of roſes, with a ſtatue of the God of Love finely executed, in the center of it. Here mirtles, there jeſſamins offered their embowering ſhade. The flower-plots though ſeemingly without order, had each its particular kind, unconfuſed with others; Jonquils, pinks, violets, tuberoſes, all at a certain nearneſs, yielding, for their being thus unmixed, their reſpective odors, the more pure and the more diſtinctly mark-

ed; which yet at a little diſtance, blend ingly united into one general fragrance.

On each ſide of the garden-door into the park, open arcades circularly diſpoſed, and raiſed in ſtories over one another, formed two kind of amphitheatres of flowers covering their ſurface with a moſt beautifull variegation. Plats of verdure, a fine piece of water, enlivened by ſwans in front of the houſe, walks of ever-greens, all found a place, uncrouded, in this not very extenſive ſpot. No beauty, in ſhort, was omited, that Art could ſteal unobſerved into Nature. Nothing, in truth, was unnatural in this retreat, except the owner of it La Pompadour herſelf, who, with a ridiculous and ſurfeiting affectation, uſed to come, in receſs, here, in the ſtyle of a

ſhepherdeſs of Arcadia, and give herſelf the air of amuſing herſelf with country-houſewifery, and playing the dairy-maid, by way, for-ſooth, of unbending from the fatigues of a Court, and of forgetting, for a while, her preſent greatneſs, as ſhe long had done her primitive littleneſs.

To this retreat ſo far preferable, in point of true taſte, to the pompous palace of Verſailles, where true pleaſure is loſt in a croud of falſe ones, or catches its death of cold in an uncomfortable vaſtneſs of apartments, was the young Murphy brought; a figure and character much more congenial to the ſpirit of the place than the owner, who had juſt quitted it for the time. Here the king reſorted to her, at his hours of conveniency or deſire. Here under the ſhade

of privacy, adding yet a poignancy to enjoyment, he paſſed minutes, he might have juſtly called the moſt voluptuous of his life, if he had had the taſte to ſet the juſt value on his happineſs. But a long uſe of the feveriſh high diet of made ſauces, *à la Pompadour*, had furred his palate, and ſpoiled his reliſh for this plain, more wholſome and infinitely better taſted diſh. It is not that wit may not claim great conſideration, even where youth and beauty may have declined, or not exiſt in a very ſuperior degree. But then that muſt be on ſtrict condition, that ſuch wit ſhould not be, as it moſt often is, miſchievouſly or dangerouſly employed, and thus ſtand rather a reproach than a merit. Whilſt ſo delicious a creature as the young Murphy needed no more of its ſeaſoning, than

would juſt defend her from inſipidity. For at her age, ſhe could properly ſpeaking, only give the hope of wit, and that ſhe did give, being remarkably ſprightly, and quick of apprehenſion. Compare her then in imagination, with La Pompadour, and her whole ſyſtem of faded attractions, and only the more forbidding for that rankneſs of artifice which obtained her the king's preference, and it will not be hard to pronounce on which of the two objects, the choice of a man of taſte would fall. The exquiſite beauty of this young creature, her florrid bloom, her artleſs innocence, her native ingenuity; all theſe points ſo captivating and endearing to a truly refined voluptuary, who would have even found an additional pleaſure in trying to form and qualify her

for more than one ſort of converſation, were loſt upon one inſenſible to the charms of unadulterated nature, from his having ſo long been a captive to the enchantment of art. An enchantment he had not it ſeems the power to break. For La Pompadour's favor ſo far from ſuffering any decline, ſeemed rather to gather freſh ſtrength from an incident, in reſpect to which, one leſs ſure of her aſcendant than ſhe was, could ſcarce have even acted the coolneſs and unconcern that ſhe did. The king behaved all the while to her as if he thought himſelf obliged to make her reparation for an injury; and it is credibly averred that from a delicacy to which ſhe certainly had very little title, he avoided making her any confidence of his new engagement, whilſt it laſted, leſt that

confidence ſhould have the air of an inſult. At leaſt, and what was nearly the ſame thing, the public never knew that he communicated it to her.

He continued however, for ſome months, his viſits to the young Murphy, who was kept in ſuch ſequeſtration that very few indeed of the ladies of the court, had admittance to her. And even thoſe few, ſo dangerous are all court-connexions, ſhe could not ſee with impunity, as may be obſerved by the following inſtance, in which the king gave ſo ſhining a proof of his ſuperior attachment to La Pompadour.

In one of his hours of dalliance with his new miſtreſs, and in the conſequent ſpirit of familiarity, ſo natural on ſuch an intimacy, ſhe aſked him archly, " how

" matters ſtood between him and his old " woman." The King enraged at theſe words, which he knew could not be the child's own, frowned, bit his lips, and looking ſternly at her, commanded her to tell him who it was that had ſet her on to talk to him in that ſtrain. The poor girl frightened out of her wits at the air ſhe ſaw him put on, threw herſelf at his feet, and without heſitation gave up the perſon who had tutored her to that effect.

It was the Marſhalleſs d'Etrées. This lady had long lived on the terms of the moſt unreſerved familiarity and confidence with La Pompadour. But female friendſhips, eſpecially at a Court, were never of a very durable nature. Certain points of pique and paſſion had for ſome time

diſ-united them. The Marſhalleſs, who had cultivated an acquaintance with the young Murphy, originally perhaps only out of compliment to the king, began to think of turning it to the account of her animoſity againſt La Pompadour. In this view, to place her in a ridiculous point of light to the King, and the ſtronger for that natural air of truth in the mouth of a child, ſhe ſuggeſted to the girl thoſe words, which ſhe repeated in the innocence of her heart, and all unaware of the conſequences of this pernicious counſel. One and the firſt of them was, that the King incenſed beyond meaſure, immediately baniſhed Madam d'Etrées to her eſtate in the country.

As to the young Murphy, he had probably too much juſtice, not to make due

allowance for the ſimplicity of her age, and inexperience having been, inſtrumentally to another's deſigns, betrayed into giving him the offence he had taken. But as her merely perſonal beauty, and the enjoyment of it now palled by repetition, ſtood as nothing in the ballance againſt the habitual paſſion and taſte he had retained for La Pompadour; if this incident was not the occaſion, it was at leaſt the epoch of his reſolution to part with her; a reſolution that was haſtened by the circumſtance of her being with child by him. This will indeed ſound ſtrange to ſuch as may not know his diſlike of having natural children, that ſhould take name and rank from that claim of birth. This averſion was founded on what he knew of the troubles which, in his minority, had been

excited on occaſion of the pretenſions of the natural ſons of Lewis the fourteenth. In the view of preventing the like, and of diſembaraſſing himſelf of a miſtreſs grown indifferent to him, he procured a huſband for her who though a man of quality, was uneaſy enough in his fortune, to overlook the ſlur of ſuch an alliance, in conſideration of the great advantages it brought with it; an ample ſettlement on the wife and the child with which ſhe was pregnant, and to which he was to paſs for the father, and the future intereſt he might reaſonably preſume from that circumſtance. One of the conditions of the match was, it ſeems, that he ſhould keep her in the country and not ſuffer her to come near the Court. This, if they were capable

of making juſt eſtimates of things, was but a favor the more.

Thus ended the adventure of the fair Murphy. But La Pompadour not content with the triumph afforded her in the iſſue of it, over the Marſhalleſs de'Etrées, involved in her projects of revenge, the Marſhal d'Etrées her huſband, and inconteſtably one of the greateſt generals of France. In the bottom of her heart ſhe deteſted the Marſhal Richelieu, not only from being ſenſible that he did himſelf the honor of moſt perfectly deſpiſing her, but for his being a kind of aſſociate with her in the King's favor, from his competition with her in ſchemes for amuſing him. The conſideration however of the ſuperior ſervice or miſchief they were capable of doing one

another, engaged them to preſerve fair appearances of mutual regard, and even of friendſhip between them. There had exiſted for ſome time this league of intereſts, and now the hatred on one ſide, and the jealouſy of profeſſion on the other, of both which the marſhal d'Etrées was the object, became another center of union to them. The conſequence of which ſo probably, was the recall of the marſhal d'Etrées, when in full career of victory and its conſequences, and the ſubſtitution of Richelieu, who loſt all the ground that the other had won. It has been ſaid, that La Pompadour, received collaterally another retribution from this laſt general, in gratitude for his promotion; a retribution at leaſt as agreeable to her paſſion of avarice, as the other point

was to her vindictiveneſs. That was, in his connivence at the traffic ſhe made of her influence in the naming forrage-contracters, ſuper-intendants of the hoſpitals, victuallers, and other jobs for the army, which were conſtantly given, not to thoſe the fitteſt for the ſervice, but to thoſe who gave her the moſt money.

The following ſcene is currently attributed to d'Etrées, after his return to court, on quitting the command of the army in Germany. The king could not well refuſe to ſo much merit, a gratious reception. He intimated however to him, that he ſhould take it well if he would ſee La Pompadour. The marſhal complied, and waited on her. She had ſet her face on.

the occaſion, to a moſt placid air of graciouſneſs with all the falſity ſhe could command. He made her a reſpectful bow, and the following ſpeech. "I come, madam, by the "king my maſter's command, to pay you "my reſpects. I kuow perfectly well, "the nature of your ſentiments towards "me; but I rely too much on the king's "juſtice to be afraid of them." With theſe words which he left her to digeſt as ſhe might, he withdrew, without waiting for her anſwer.

But, beſides the ſacrifice of ſo able a general, in ſo critical a conjuncture, to a miſtreſs, and that miſtreſs La Pompour, ſhe alſo enjoyed that of one of the head-miniſters of the kingdom. This was monſieur d'Argenſon, ſecretary of ſtate.

When that execrable attempt was made on the king's life by Damiens, who could not be too ſeverely puniſhed, if he committed it in his ſenſes, nor, in all humanity and even juſtice, too much pitied nor too readily pardoned, if it was merely owing to the deep misfortune of his wanting them; the wound he had given was, at the firſt, imagined to be much more dangerous than it happily was. The king's death was expected by the whole court, and by himſelf. It is eaſy to conceive what emotions ſuch an accident muſt excite. As it was natural to think that La Pompadour would, on this occaſion, not fail of flying to expreſs her concern for his Majeſty; there was a powerful party formed to forbid her the preſence. The biſhop who

attended the king, urged it as matter of conſcience. D'Argenſon indulged his private ſentiments in ſtrongly ſeconding him. La Pompadour in courſe preſents herſelf at the chamber-door, and has the mortification to have it ſhut in her face. It was a great pity. The courtiers loſt, by this repulſe, one of the moſt compleatly theatrical ſcenes that ever could be acted. Imagination with all its powers in the pictureſc ſtrain, can hardly form to itſelf any thing ſo high as the reality, had it been admitted, would probably have ſubſcribed. The tragic tone, the attempt at dignity in diſtreſs, the tender terrors, the grief too mighty for utterance, or only vented in broken exclamations, were all a rich diverſion of which the court was by this

means cruelly deprived. She herſelf being bitterly diſappointed of the diſplay of thoſe airs, was forced to ſwallow the affront thus publickly put upon her, tho' with a ſtomach, it may be imagined, very little diſpoſed to digeſt it.

As the danger of the wound had however been rather meaſured by the importance of the perſon, than by its reality, all alarm for its being fatal ceaſed the very next day; and in two or three more, the king thoroughly recovered, ſaw company, and reſumed his uſually ſyſtem of life. One of his firſt viſits was to la Pompadour, who received him all in tears, with a countenance, aptly compoſed for the impreſſion ſhe had meditated. To her compliments on his re-

covery, ſucceeded the moſt pathetic expoſtulation with him, for the treatment ſhe had met with. She concluded with obſerving to him, "That ſince ſhe found "ſhe was to be debarred from perſonal at-"tendance on him, when it was moſt her "duty to pay it, and himſelf muſt moſt "need it, it was better for her to with-"draw in time, and deprive her enemies "of the malignant joy of offering her ſuch "another indignity."

This threat of withdrawing, rarely made by women in her ſituation, but when they are ſure of not being taken at their word, or who would ſo often be miſerably bit if they were, had its full effect on the king. Determined to give her all the ſatisfac-

tion ſhe could require, and much more than ſhe ought to have required; he baniſhed from court the ſcrupulous biſhop, and three or four more of the coutiers, who had moſt diſtinguiſhed themſelves in oppoſing her entrance. D'Argenſon, he diſmiſſed from his employments, without any mitigation of his diſgrace. For the continuing his nephew in place was not any, ſince the young marquiſs de Paulmy d'Argenſon, he was ſatisfied, obſerved another ſort of conduct towards la Pompadour, than the uncle, who had long made open profeſſion of deteſting her; ſentiments which ſhe moſt cordially returned, and did not ſlip this opportunity of gratifying.

Paulmy d'Argenſon, did not hold his poſts long after his uncle. He has been lately (this year, 1758) driven out of power by the force of conjunctures, on his having ſerved la Pompadour, but too effectually in her ſchemes againſt the marſhal d'Etrées. Her favor however, could not ſave him. So true it is, that when once affairs are put on ſo irregular a footing, as ſuch a woman's whim, every thing becomes precarious. Thwarting her brings diſgrace; humoring her does the ſame, from the conſequences being thrown not upon her, but on him who humors her. This laſt was the young d'Argenſon's caſe, who together with Ronillé, another miniſter, having, in compliance to la Pompadour, aided and abetted the Maillebois in their

combinations againſt marſhal d'Etrées; were, on his clearing himſelf ſo nobly as he did, forced to be ſacrificed to that juſt clamor and reſentment of the public, with which even deſpotiſm itſelf is ſometimes obliged to temporize, and keep meaſures.

But, what occaſioned the moſt ſurprize was, monſieur de Machault, Keeper of the Seals, going out of power at the ſame time and I think, the ſame day, as the elder D'Argenſon. For Machault was at the head of a party directly oppoſite to him, and was known to be devoted to la Pompadour. It is true, that he had repreſented with ſome warmth, againſt the exceſſive expences of the king, eſpecially in his *petits-ſoupers*, in what are called the *pleaſure-*

apartments. For as to the charges of the *grand convert*, or public meals, they cannot exceed, being regulated by a ſtanding order. So frivolous a pretext however, for his diſmiſſion, as that of the King and la Pompadour, or la Pompadour and the King's having taken offence at the liberty of his remonſtrances on this occaſion, could hardly have been received at all, if it had not been given out with an air of myſtery and acquaintance with the ſecrets of the court.

But thoſe accuſtomed to penetrate deeper than the ſurface of things, particularly with reſpect to courts, fancied they ſaw, in this ſo apparently inconſiſtent a co-incidence of diſgraces, the continuance and even the proof of a policy conſtantly attributed to

la Pompadour. Perhaps their conjecture is over-refined. If ſo, thoſe who know better, will have a right to laugh at and explode it. The ground of it is however, ſo curious, and paints ſo ſtrongly part of the French character, that, let the inferences be true or falſe as to la Pompadour, it cannot be ſuppreſſed to ſo much advantage as ſtated.

There can be few, who have not heard of the differences between the clergy and the parliament of Paris. But it may not be perhaps ſo univerſally underſtood, that the matter of diſpute is frivolous beyond imagination; beyond even what one could ever ſuſpect the French themſelves, with all their turn for trifling, of treating ſeriouſly. Swift's celebrated controverſy be-

tween the Big-endians and the Little-endians, in Lilliput, turned upon a point, literally ſpeaking of incomparably more imporatnce. The aſcertainment whether an egg had better be broke at the great or ſmall end is, after all, of ſome little utility to mankind, and falls at leaſt within the ſenſes. But thoſe points of religious metaphyſics, broached at firſt by one Janſenius, and ſince his death made the foundation of a ſpiritual and even temporal ſchiſm in France, beſides their perfect inſignificance and even exquiſite ridiculonſneſs, are by their very nature eternally undeterminable by all human judgment. He who gave birth to them, the clergy that oppoſed them, the parliament that favored them; muſt have been, are, and muſt forever be, all equally and neceſſarily in a pro-

found ignorance of the right of either ſide of the queſtion, whicheven when decided, would not contribute the value of a pin's point to the quiet and happineſs of mankind, they are in the mean time ſuffered to diſturb. The parliament indeed, ſeems to have much the advantage in point of juſtice, ſince its activity has been employed to relieve the people from the tyranny of the clergy, obſtinately bent on cramming the bull *Unigenitus* down their throats. But even that activity, laudable as it ſtands in its motives, might perhaps have been better employed, if inſtead of taking for its object, thoſe certificates of Anti-Janſeniſm, exacted from dying perſons; a tyranny that from its great abſurdity and ſenſeleſſneſs muſt ſoon have ceaſed of itſelf; the parliament have exerted

itſelf againſt the court's over-whelming the ſubject with accumulated taxes and intolerable impoſts, and not have loſt ſight of a ſubſtance, to run a ſhadow-hunting.

In the actual ſtate of things, it was natural for both parties to look up to the king, as capable of giving a great weight to which-ever ſide he ſhould chuſe, even though the clergy does not acknowledge him for its judge. That prerogative of judging is, it ſeems ſpecially reſerved for ſome little dirty Italian prieſt, who from his being canonically ſuperanuated enough to be exalted to the papal chair, is conſequently ofteneſt a dotard. Now, imagine, who can, ſo exquiſite a jeſt, as that of a ſilly old man's fulminating from that mock-

altitude, his claim to infallibility, the ſovereign attribute of God! A claim that with many others of his ſcarce leſs impudently mad, are only fit to be dated from Bedlam, and can paſs but on thoſe who are duly qualified for an hoſpital of ideots.

But ſtill much depended on the king's declaring himſelf; and ſince ſo much did depend upon it, it may reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that he was not a little embaraſſed about the part he ſhould take.

If he ſhould ſuffer the clergy to depreſs the parliament, there was to be feared, that dropping its idle object of contention, the parliament would, if but out of reſentment recur to a much more proper and import

tant conſideration, the expediency of lightening the burden of the people devoured by taxes and exactions. That parliament has not, it is true, the authority, the dignity, nor the weight of the Britiſh one; but ſtill the very name of parliament carries with it, even in that country, where its privileges are ſo miſerably abridged, ſome thing in the ſound of it, favorable to the ſubject. The verification of the burſal edicts iſſued by the court, which is held a neceſſary form, though but a form, and the right of remonſtrance ſtill continued to the parliament, are circumſtances that joined to its credit with the people, do not ſuffer its ſentiments to be entirely inſignificant.

If on, the other hand, the king by too ſignal a partiality, ſhould give way to the Parliament's reducing the Clergy to order, he would have to apprehend the diſaffecting and even revolt of that formidable body; whoſe influence is well known over the maſs of the people, which though it might be inſtinctively averſe to the Clergy's triumphing over the Parliament, would not be the leſs apt on any appearance of its being perſecuted to take fire from its incendiaries and break out into a general blaze. "Religion is in danger," would be the alarming cry, and what is reaſon oppoſed to the fury of excited ſuperſtition?

Beſides that as the King's great object was to get money from both ſides, clergy and laity, the too much diſobliging of either might, in the conſequences, weaken his own power over both.

Evident as this dilemma was, he was, in courſe under great perplexity how to act. It was referved for the ſuperior ſubtlety and artifice of La Pompadour to relieve him from it. At leaſt ſhe has the credit of it. Her counſel was that, the poſition of things conſidered, the king ſhould by temporizing with both parties ſuffer neither to preponderate, but occaſionally throw the weight of his influence into the light ſcale. That in the mean time he ſhould take care to leave them, their

bone of janſeniſm to groul over at one another, and amuſe themſelves with it.

This laſt clauſe of the advice was calculated to make any ſtroke of authority that the king ſhould occaſionally interpoſe, paſs currently for belonging to the bottom of the diſpute itſelf, if, in ſuch a chimera, it can be ſaid to have a bottom. The effect propoſed, as unconſequential as it was to the general knowledge, not only of its being a mere amuſement, but of the motives of the court for keeping it up, did not the leſs enſue. The wonder would have been if it had not, to thoſe who know the nature of party-rage to be the ſame every where, always the more tenacious of its object in proportion to the triflingneſs of

it, to which it ſo often has not the excuſe of being blind, or of not being ſenſible of the exiſtence of infinitely more important calls for attention, which are ruinouſly neglected for it.

That La Pompadour was the authoreſs of this policy of a neutrality, there is great reaſon to believe: but that the ſpirit of it was purſued is certain. On one ſide, the Parliament, on the other, the Archbiſhop of Paris, exiled in their turns, with many other incidents of the like nature, in the courſe of the conteſt, plainly prove, that the King adopted, in practice, this trimming plan. But nothing made it more clear, nor the ſhare of La Pompadour in it more ſuſpected than the diſmiſſion of her favorite Machault, preciſely

at the time that d'Argenſon was ſacrificed to her. D'Argenſon, as has been obſerved, was held to be the head of the Clergy's party, Machault that of the Parliament's. That the Clergy ſhould not take too much umbrage at the diſgrace of its champion; the King ſtill proceeding in the character he had choſen of ballance-maſter, might think himſelf, by way of compromiſe, and to quiet ſuſpicions, obliged to part with a miniſter obnoxious to that body on account of his favoring the cauſe of the Parliament. Not that this diſmiſſion would probably have taken place, without La Pompadour's conſent; but ſhe made, it ſeems, no ſcruple of ſacrificing a friend, rather than loſe her revenge on an enemy: ſince one could not be done without the other, or, at leaſt,

without too much violating that political ſyſtem of neutrality, ſhe is ſuppoſed to have herſelf ſuggeſted.

The difference however of the treatment of the miniſters manifeſted clearly enough the difference of the motives on which they were diſplaced. D'Argenſon has his poſt, drily and without any ſoftening circumſtance, taken from him, yet fell very little pitied: beſides his being of a ſtiff, auſtere character, as he was both in ſpeculation and practice, a great zealot for depotiſm, the people in general were not much diſpleaſed that he ſhould feel a ſtroke of it, even though he was known to hate La Pompadour. Machault had a large penſion, and, as they term it, all the honors of war

granted him. Being much the honeſter man of the too, he was the more regretted, and his appearance on the popular ſide, that of the Parliament, atoned in ſome meaſure for his complaiſance to the king's miſtreſs.

In the mean time, the conſequence to La Pompadour of her being imagined to have given the king this advice, with reſpect to the two Parties, was, what it was natural to expect it would be, the deteſtation of both. Both felt that, by this means, they were made the tools of her ambition, without her having, beyond that, any the leaſt concern or regard for either. But even the neutrals and well-wiſhers, in general, to their king and country, did not extreamly admire the

plan itſelf. They found in it more of the female cunning than of manly prudence. They allowed it was well enough calculated to ſerve a preſent purpoſe of fleecing the people, with more facility to the court, but thought it a dangerous palliation, which not curing the evil, left it to gather more force, with time, in its inward fermentation. It appeared beſides a kind of proſtitution of the ſovereign power to pecuniary views, the delaying to reſtore authoratively a peace that could not too ſoon have been procured between the contending parties, if the tranquillity of the ſubjects had been as dear to the king as their money. It was, in fact, a kind of craft not much ſuperior, in point of dignity, to a petty fogger's nurſing

a litigation for the ſake of his gain by it.

By this time, all ranks, all claſſes of the people concurred in one point, the hatred of La Pompadour. The Pariſians eſpecially could not forbear giving her the moſt public marks of it. Whenever ſhe came to Paris, crouds followed her coach, hooting and ſhowering upon her invectives and maledictions. This proceeded at length to ſuch an intolerable height that it is credibly ſaid that, for ſome years, ſhe has not dared to go thither, unleſs perhaps incognito.

Neither is ſhe more beloved throughout the kingdom. The nation, in general,

holds her in the utmoſt abhorrence, for which many reaſons are given.

The people are rarely favorable to Kings miſtreſſes. They look upon the King as ſo highly born to the dignity of good example, that they never take well his ſetting too flagrantly a bad one; but even then, their animoſity falls chiefly on the perſon who is the cauſe of the diſorder. They hardly expect or even wiſh him not to be gallant, but they require his being decent. Otherwiſe he is conſidered as ſtanding charged not only with his own guilt, but with all that is produced by the imitation of him which is never but an extenſive one.

But, with regard particularly to La Pompadour, there exiſted ſeveral aggravating circumſtances; the lowneſs of her original, and her being a wife forcibly and arbitrarily taken away from her huſband, and kept in defiance of his right; a right ever accounted ſacred. His compelled or mercenary acquieſcence afterwards rectified nothing: it only proved the oppreſſion of deſpotiſm or his meanneſs. It is not however improbable that many a one exclaimed againſt this procedure of the King's, that was only ſorry at heart, for its not being his own wife that was taken away ſo.

It was alſo generally reſented that whilſt the Queen and the daughters of France were barely allowed for expences ſuitable

to their rank, La Pompadour, with her family, ſhould be wallowing in immenſe riches, and have all the royal favors, and treaſures of the kingdom at her diſpoſal.

It could not be very pleaſing beſides to that nation, to ſee the great and ableſt miniſters of ſtate and generals of armies either degraded into a ſervile precarious dependence on a low obſcure woman, ſo unaccountably lifted up, and who was conſtantly giving marks of her miſerable miſtaking the artifice by which ſhe governed the king for a capacity of governing the kingdom; or elſe ſhamefully ſacrificed to her little paſſions of vanity or revenge.

Nor was it amongſt the leaſt of her reproaches, that prodigious venality of offices ſhe had introduced wholly to her own profit, and to the apparent ruin of the intereſts of the nation, which could not but be ill-ſerved by perſons, who having bought their employs, thought of nothing but how to make the moſt of their bargains. France itſelf ſeemed to be put up by her at auction to the beſt bidder.

There is one popular charge indeed, againſt her, which from its abſurdity would ſcarcely bear repetition, if in a fortune like her's, and in theſe times, when truth ſeems to have taken up her abode in the antipodes to probability, any thing

could be abſolutely pronounced incredible.

It has been ſaid that ſhe was treating with the king of Pruſſia for the purchaſe from him of the ſovereignty of Neufchatel, a province of Switzerland, nay that the treaty was conſummated, with reſerve to declare it, in proper time, and that the money was actually paid, though at a time that France was at war with him, which would be a ſpecies of treaſon. This may then well be ſaid to want proof. The motive aſſigned for this tranſaction is, that La Pompadour ſenſible of all the odium ſhe has incurred, and the danger to her on the king's demiſe, of falling a prey to her powerfull and numerous enemies, might provi-

dently have in view to ſecure herſelf in time ſuch a retreat.

Her ſcheme would be, on the firſt ſerious alarm for the king's life, to get into a poſt-chaiſe and make the beſt of her way to her own dominions. Who knows too, if there is any truth, as moſt probably there is not a tittle of it in all this allegation, but that as ſhe has no children, nor likely to have any, ſhe might give herſelf the air, in imitation of the Roman Flora, of bequeathing, at her death, this acquiſition to the crown of France?

Yet plain though it ſtands from facts that admit no dubious interpretation, that ambition, vanity, inſolence and artifice

eſſentially conſtitute her character, it muſt not be thought that ſome virtues or appearances of virtues do not ſparkle from amidſt all this rubbiſh. It would be vain to imagine that ſhe could do all the execution ſhe has done without the aſſiſtance of ſome merit, ſome good qualities to interceed for her bad ones, to gloſs them over, and even contribute to their effect.

It does not in the firſt place appear that with all the world's keenneſs for diſcovering matter of imputation to her, ſhe ever gave it room to tax her with any of thoſe groſs gallantries, to the ſuſpicion of which the very ſound of king's miſtreſs commonly leads, and with which this her hiſtory will probably have been expected

to be enlivened. But truth brings with it a pleaſure too ſuperior not to compenſate that diſappointment. Excepting her falſe ſtep with the king, there lies no reproach againſt her for want of virtue. Yet is ſhe not for this held a jot the more eſtimable. It may ſerve her indeed for matter of parade to her royal keeper; but by the reſt of the world, that ſame chaſtity of her's, is even leſs attributed to a conſtitutional inſenſibility, and the more and more damping effect of her growing diſorder, than to her being too thoroughly engroſſed by the purely ſelfiſh paſſions to be ſuſceptible of that of love, or even of that turn for gallantry, which ſo often paſſing for love, takes his name in vain; and for which, nature the powerful parent of both, has ſo much more to ſay, than for thoſe

vices, which poſſeſs her to their excluſion. She would be thought more pardonable, if ſhe had had the plea of loving the king, but he is the only one perhaps on the face of the earth, that does her the honor of believing her capable of it, or indeed of love for any one but herſelf.

It has beeen before obſerved, that ſhe has all the acccompliſhments imaginable, all the talents for pleaſing. Happy enough not to be born without wit, and even a large ſhare of it, ſhe has greatly cultivated it, and what is more, ſhe loves, or affects to love in others. Nor with all her meanneſſes has ſhe that ſo abject, ſo compleatly deſpicable, and ſo very common an one, of the mock-Mecænus's of

the times, who, by way of a good air, pretend to eſteem it, without being tempted to encourage it; and even when ſome ſcanty benefit comes hard-plucked from their vanity, or drops a windfall of their whim or humor, it is generally accompanied with ſo mean and inſolent a diſplay of ſuperiority, as to be rather an inſult, than an obligation. Senſible that many valuable ends were to be anſwered, if in no more then improving and refining her own underſtanding, by her converſation with thoſe of diſtinction for genius and literature, to ſay nothing of that pleaſure to be found in it, ſo ſuperior to thouſands of the more faſhionable ones, ſhe has done herſelf the honor of careſſing, patronizing and eſſentially ſerving many who had thoſe titles.

The king himſelf never paſſed for having much reliſh for men of letters, and indeed the general ſilence of them on that head, forms a kind of tacit condemnation. It proves at leaſt, that his neglect of them has deſerved their contempt; for true wit never was ungrateful. It is, on the contrary, too ſubject to run into the other extream, as ſtands atteſted by all the over-ſtrain of adulation paid to Auguſtus, and Lewis the fourteenth.

It was then but the greater merit in la Pompadour, to force the king in this his retrenchment of apathy to wit and literary merit. Not always to make a blameable uſe of her influence over him, ſhe procured a penſion of ſix thouſand

livres, or about three hundred pounds a year for Crebillon the elder. Another ſhe obtained for mademoiſelle de Luſſan, an ingenious authoreſs. She countenanced and promoted the intereſt of Marmontel, With Voltaire ſhe ever kept on fair terms. Her treatment of the abbot le Blanc, chiefly known here by his letters on the Engliſh nation, of which it is plain he knew ſo little, is not quite ſo clear. She had prevailed on him to go as a kind of Mentor to her brother the marqueſs de Marigny, in his travels to Italy, whoſe brutality ſoon occaſioning a diſagreement between them, they returned not over-pleaſed with one another. The ſiſter, too much the ſiſter, took care that the abbot, in lieu of the great favors ſhe

had made him expect, ſhould meet with nothing but rebuffs to his pretenſions. At length, ſhe put him off, with what might be rather deemed a refinement of inſult, than a mark of regard; the place of hiſtoriographer to that ſame illuſtrious brother of her's, in his department of ſuper-intendance of the Buildings, a place than which there can hardly be imagined a lower one, except indeed, that of hiſtoriographer to herſelf; the reproach of which nothing could well obviate, but the conſideration of the lowneſs of the ſubject, being compenſated by the greatneſs and importance of its connexions.

Still, ſhe cannot but deſerve ſome commendation for her benefactions in general

to men of wit and letters, let her motive be what it will. The liberalities with which ſhe inſpired the king, were a merit both to her and himſelf, in whoſe ſtation of royalty, they were but a duty of which the reminding him was, in fact right loyal ſervice. The greateſt part of the honor of them indeed, as but right is, redounds to herſelf, from whoſe influence it is pretty univerſally conceived they are derived, there being no great reaſon to imagine they would come into exiſtence out of his own ſpecial grace and mere motion.

Nor does ſhe withall neglect the patronage of the other liberal arts; muſic, painting, ſculpture, and architecture. The

putting indeed that taſteleſs brother of hers at the head of them, in quality of ſuper-intendant, has at the firſt an untoward aſpect; but as if ſhe was conſcious of his defects, and of the juſtice of ſupplementing them, ſhe herſelf in ſome manner officiates the poſt for him. All applications are made to her by all the artiſts in theſe ſeveral branches, and there is no eminent one ſhe does not diſtinguiſh and encourage. She not only viſits herſelf in perſon, the work-places of thoſe employed in the mechanic arts, but brings the king with her, to whom ſhe points out and recommends their reſpective merit. For ſome ſhe has obtained penſions, lodgings in the Louvre, and other advantages and diſtinctions. The tapeſtries of the Gobelins and the carpet-works of the Savon-

nerie have felt her beneficial influence. Neither does she fail of making a due parade of all these laudable attentions, serving as they must to place her in a respectable point of light to the king, who cannot but see the fitness of them, and withall their tendency to do himself honor. They are even of service to the nation itself, from the known effect and power of the royal cherishment to raise great artists in their various professions, and especially in those which have for their object, either those public decorations that illustrate a country, and draw a profitable resort of foreigners to it; or those articles of which the prevalence of luxury, having made a kind of necessaries of life, they would, if not to be found at home, be sought for

abroad, to the detrimental extraction of ſpecie from the kingdom.

But ſhe was not, it ſeems reſerved for an exemption from the great and general rule, that no perfectly true taſte can exiſt where there is a want of elevation of ſentiments, or of that ſuperior dignity of mind which it does not appear, that ſhe had ever the honor of knowing. She could not help falling into the current of the national paſſion of the French for baubles and falſe refinements of taſte. If the liberal and ſolid arts were countenanced by her, ſhe did not the leſs favor thoſe frivolous ones, that are in the pay of effeminate nicety or vain curioſity. Studied ornaments of dreſs, new inventions of faſhions, toys, trinkets, change of apartments

for every ſeaſon, quaint devices in furniture, in ſhort, all the precious trifling of fanciful luxury, ſeemed to divide her favor with the nobler objects of talents and genius, much in the ſtyle of a woman ſharing her ſmiles ſo equally between a man of ſenſe and a fop, that it is hard to ſay which is preferred; though the world rarely diſpoſed to the moſt favorable ſide of a doubt, generally ſuſpects, from thoſe two characters being naturally not made for a competition, her rather inclining inwardly to the worſt, and that her outward regard for the other, ſerves her only for a cover, or as a kind of ſaving compoſition for her reputation of taſte.

It has been ſaid, that la Pompadour has an exquiſite taſte; but as that has been

obſerved to be incompatible with any littleneſſes of mind, falſity of the heart or affectation of miſ-becoming points of diſtinction, there would perhaps be greater propriety of expreſſion, in ſaying, that ſhe had an uncommon fancy. Many proofs of it might be given, but one may ſuffize.

On a viſit the King made her at Bellevue, that beautiful ſeat he had cauſed to be built for her, at ſo laviſh an expence, that no invention was wanting to art, nor no art to luxury; la Pompadour who was prepared for his reception, led him into an apartment, of which, at one end, folding-doors opened into a parterre on a level with it. It was the depth of Winter, and the firſt thing that met his ſight, was a

garden, compoſed of ranges of flower-vaſes, the contents of which were in full blow, in all the livelieſt colors of the ſpring, whilſt at the ſame inſtant, his ſmell was ſtruck with a diffuſion from them, of their ſweeteſt natural odors. This could not however be but a momentary illuſion, ſince the flowers were no other than artificial ones of porcelain, in the cloſeſt imitation of nature, and the ſcent they exhaled, proceeded from their being ſtrongly impregnated, every flower, with its peculiar eſſence.

This deception appeared indeed ingenious to the king; but it gave the courtiers room for a remark, that there could be nothing, in or out of nature, into

which ſhe had not the ſecret of breathing ſuperiorly the ſpirit of artifice. This notion generally prevalling, not however without her having given full-ſufficient cauſe for it, made all her actions ſuſpected of it and none ſo much as the moſt plauſible ones. Even the tribute of grief, ſhe occaſionally, and it might be unaffectedly paid to the feelings of nature, ſo far from being allowed to do her the honor it deſerved to do her, if it was but for her attention to ſave the appearances of duty and humanity, was conſtrued into an artful abuſe of them, to the purpoſes of falſity and pretence.

When Monſieur Le Normant de Tournéan, who in the character of her

preſumptive father, had taken ſo much care of her education, was ſtruck with the apoplexy, of which he died, long after ſhe was in favor with the king; on the firſt news of his danger, ſhe flew to Eſtiolles, a ſeat and eſtate from which her huſband Normant his nephew takes that addition to his name, by which he is moſt commonly known. She ſaw the uncle, who was then there, but inſenſible and paſt recovery. The violent ſigns ſhe gave of affliction were moſt probably, or at leaſt for the greateſt part, real and unaffected. It would have been too brutal an inſenſibility, too enormous an ingratitude not to have felt for the loſs of one, who in the accompliſhments he had given her, had laid the foundation of

what ſhe eſteems her good fortune, unenviable as it is. She ſtaid fifteen days at this place, digeſting her grief, having had the precaution to have d'Eſtiolles acquainted with her journey, that he might not meet her there.

It ought not alſo to paſs unnoted that ſhe ever kept great meaſures with Paris de Montmartel, who had been joint-keeper of her mother with Le Normant de Tournéan. She might not care for attacking, in him, a man ſhe could not be very ſure was not her own father. Beſides the great chance of his being ſo, the air of her face very much reſembles his. At preſent he paſſes for her firſt miniſter.

As to d'Eſtiolles that ſo cruelly deſerted huſband of her's, who in marrying her, in the teeth of ſo many objections had made her firſt and her beſt fortune; her conduct to him on his return to Paris from Avignon where he had been exiled and at the point of death for her ſake, greatly manifeſted the mixture of lights and ſhades that enter into the picture of her, in which however the latter ſo ſtrongly predominate. She ſhowed indeed at a diſtance ſome remains of regard for him, but all the marks ſhe gave him of it, were ſo palpably adulterated with vanity, and particularly with that artifice which conſtitutes her ſpecific diſtinction of character, that the greateſt merit of them was loſt from the imperfection of

the ſtamp of the heart on them. Even her moſt plauſible acts of reparation to him, appeared to have their origin more from her ſilly pride of king's miſtreſs, than from tenderneſs for an injured huſband; of whom too in the midſt of all her preſent ramparts of greatneſs, ſhe could not have but ſome dread; for guilt is never but cowardly. But whatever was their motive, they were ſure all of them to carry with them a daſh of trick and contrivance, even where the nature of them did not ſeem to require any, juſt as there are ſome who lie conſtitutionally, in indifferent matters, purely for lying ſake; and indeed, what artifice can there be that is not ſtrictly reſolvable into a lie in action, or in words?

He had, as has been before obſerved, faln into a libertine courſe of life, and kept a number of low women. La Pompadour taking the ſcandal of this to herſelf, as ſhe well might, ſince ſhe was the occaſion of it, imagined the remedy would be to provide him a miſtreſs in form; a miſtreſs of a certain rank and character to attach him to her and take him off the common. In this view ſhe got underhand recommended to him a creature or at leaſt a dependent of her own, one Madam de la Mothe, the widow of an officer of the Cavalry. He was caught with the lure thrown out to him, engaged with her, and had a child, a daughter, by her. But poor d'Eſtiolles was not, it ſeems, born to be more happy in a

miſtreſs than in a wife. He ſoon diſcovered not only that ſhe was guilty of infidelities to him, but that ſhe was a kind of ſpy upon all his actions, which were immediately carried by her to his wife, in whom he could not approve ſo over-officious a concern about them, after her ſo manifeſt a forfeiture of her right to it. He diſcarded then this miſtreſs, but could not help, on his wife's poſitive inſiſtence, allowing her a very conſiderable penſion. As to the child, La Pompadour having her reaſons of equity to conſider it in ſome meaſure as her own, ſince her own it ought to have been, ſhe provided for it in a manner that ſtrongly characterizes that vein of artifice which runs through her whole conduct.

It muſt be firſt obſerved that the laws and cuſtoms in France being in many points unfavorable to illegitimate children, this one of d'Eſtiolles muſt have been conſequently involved in the general diſadvantage, both as to the ſtain of birth, and even as to matters of intereſt. To obviate this inconvenience, La Pompadour took meaſures for a gentleman, being found for her, one of the cleareſt nobility, unmarried and poor. The ſearch had not been either long or difficult; ſuch an one was preſently brought to an agent of hers, whoſe firſt queſtion to him was, whether a hundred thouſand crowns (twelve thouſand five hundred pounds) would be of ſervice to him. His anſwer was conformable to his circumſtances.

He was then informed of the condition on which the ſum would be given him, which was preciſely as follows. He was to chooſe any wife for himſelf, that he ſhould like beſt, provided ſhe was his equal in birth, to be married in the face of the church, and in which ceremony was to be included the bridegroom and bride's paſſing the child of d'Eſtiolles under the canopy held over them, during the ſervice, for their own, as if begotten between them before marriage.

This form, it ſeems, is allowed a full legitimation to all intents and purpoſes of any children, belonging to both parties, though born to them out of wedlock. It has been ſometimes ſeen

that three, four, or more, and ſome full grown have ſtood under the canopy that covered them with their father and mother, whilſt the nuptial ritual was reading, upon which they become inſtantly veſted with all the rights of the moſt lawfull iſſue. But then it is held a fraud, if the children thus covered are not truly and properly thoſe of the parties who thus own them, or by them believed to be ſo, of which they are required to make a ſolemn declaration in the face of God and the People.

The greatneſs however of the proferred ſum removed all ſcruples; the condition was accepted, executed, and the child of d'Eſtiolles thus covered, entered

at once into poſſeſſion of all the honors and privileges of lawfull and noble birth. She bears the name of the family into which ſhe is thus admitted, and La Pompadour, by her intereſt, took care that ſhe ſhould not want the benefit of her qualification.

She procured her ſince to be choſen one of the canoneſſes of Remiremont, to be received, amongſt whom, it is neceſſary to make proof of a clear and antient nobility on both ſides of deſcent from father and mother. They are taken in at any age, and ſubject to the regularity of a convent-life, though without renouncing their temporal eſtate, or taking any vows, ſo that they may, marry when they pleaſe.

As this girl is the only child d'Eſtiolles is at leaſt known now to have, it is reaſonably imagined ſhe will inherit all he can poſſibly leave her, which alone would make her one of the moſt conſiderable fortunes in France.

Many laughed, and more were ſcandalized at an abuſe of a church-ceremony, that was even a kind of forgery, but all diſcovered the finger of a La Pompadour in this piece of management. Another inſtance of that her conſtantly mixing contrivance and deſign in every thing ſhe does, offers itſelf in the following tranſaction of hers, with reſpect to her huſband.

D'Eſtiolles, was lodged, together with his ſiſter, Madam de Baſchi, at the Hotel of la Valiere, in hired apartments. La Pompadour's vanity was hurt by his not having a houſe of his own, and as ſhe was at the ſame time deſirous that on his getting one, it ſhould be anſwerable to the high idea of dignity and importance ſhe had annexed to his being the huſband of his Majeſty's miſtreſs; ſhe was not a little embarraſſed how to prevail on him to purchaſe ſuch an one.

D'Eſtiolles, though a lover of pleaſures, was far from liberal even in them, but in all other points he was rather avaritious. She could not expect that he would

readily diſburſe ſo large a ſum as the acquiſition of a fine houſe would require. She could indeed have advanced it herſelf, and not impoſſibly, would have made that ſacrifice of her intereſtedneſs to her vanity, but that the happy turn of her head for art ſuggeſted to her a contrivance to carry the point without expence to herſelf.

There was one Monſieur Bouret, an officer in the revenue, a creature of and dependent on Monſieur Machault, conſequently attached to La Pompadour, and who from beginnings moderate enough, had got a very large fortune. He was beſides a man of wit and pleaſure. He had built one of the nobleſt

houſes in Paris, and furniſhed it in a ſtyle of the greateſt magnificence. One drawing-room alone had coſt him above eight thouſand pounds: every thing in it to the very wainſcotting and window-ſhutters, being what they call *vieux lacq* or old japan. Another article certainly of more expence than taſte, was a large cloſet lined throughout with fine looking-glaſs, ſides, floor, ceiling, and doors. All the joints were hid by feſtoons of roſes and garlands of flowers, painted on the glaſs, by the beſt hands of Paris. This may ſuffice to give an idea of the value of the houſe, in which every thing was in proportion.

Bouret, who knew that La Pompadour paſſionately wiſhed her huſband in a houſe of that figure, made her a tender of it, which ſhe gladly accepted, and concerted with him the following ſcheme for ſurprizing d'Eſtiolles into the acceptance of the offer that was to be made him of it.

One evening that Bouret was at ſupper with d'Eſtiolles, at his ſiſter Madam de Baſchi's, with other ladies, he took occaſion to make the converſation fall on the inconvenience of hired lodgings, and offered to d'Eſtiolles, to ſell him that fine houſe of his above-mentioned, with all the furniture ſtanding. His anſwer was, that he could not poſſibly af-

ford ſo much money as it was natural to think he would aſk for it. After a great many motives of perſuaſion, in which Bouret chiefly inſiſted on the cheapneſs of the bargain it ſhould be to him; to all which d'Eſtiolles continued inflexib'e in the notion it could never come to ſo little as he was willing to give; Bouret at length ſtaggard his reſolution, by propoſing to refer the peremptory naming of the ſum to d'Eſtiolles his own miſtreſs, Madam de la Mothe, then preſent. This d'Eſtiolles could not but think very favorable to him. There were two things that probably he did not, at that time, know, the one that Bouret was violently ſuſpected of being on the moſt intimate terms with that faithfull

miſtreſs of his; the other, that ſhe had her cue from him.

Between jeſt and earneſt however, he conſented, that de la Mothe ſhould fix the price, which ſhe accordingly did, as had been pre-concerted between her and Bouret, at a hundred thouſand livres, ſomewhat leſs than five thouſand pounds, tho' the houſe and furniture were richly worth a million of livres, about fifty thouſand pounds ſterling.

Bouret affected a ſurprize, as he well might; but ſaid, ſince he had given his word to abide by the lady's award, he would not affront her ſo much as to retract it. D'Eſtiolles, who could ſcarce

not ſmoke ſome myſtery at the bottom of this, acquieſced meanly enough in an agreement, the intereſt of which was ſo viſibly and ſo unconſcionably on his ſide: the bargain was inſtantly ratified by a regular bill of ſale to him.

But Bouret knew very well what he had been doing. In three or four days after, he received from La Pompadour a Patent for a place in the Poſt-Office, worth a hundred thouſand livres a year.

Thus ended this farce, perhaps only memorable for its furniſhing one proof of the moſt conſiderable employs in the kingdom, being the ſport of that women's vanity and whim.

Many more inſtances of the like nature might here be produced, if the multiplying them unneceſſarily would not look too like giving a rhapſody of the town-chat of Paris, or of ſtories caught from the pages of lackeys of the anti-chambers, and circulated in the public. As to the unobſervance of dates, or of the order of facts, there can ſcarcely need an apology for it. There are few that would not even be diſpleaſed with ſeeing a hiſtory of this nature treated with ſuch a gravity and dignity of exactneſs as if it could have any pretentions to them.

It is preſumed, it will be accepted for ſufficient, that ſcarce any of thoſe

principal hiſtorical ſtrokes of La Pompadour's life hitherto ſhould be omitted, which marking the character, ſerve to eſtabliſh a compleat idea of her. As to veracity, thoſe, it is, who are already the beſt acquainted with her hiſtory that will hardly not feel what ſo rarely but makes itſelf felt, where it exiſts, that truth has been always the aim, even where it may have ſometimes been miſſed or miſtaken through miſ-information or want of judgment. To them eſpecially it will be evident that the meaſure of what may be ſtrictly verified, greatly exceeds what may be unavoidably falſe, and to the candid, will conſequently atone for it.

But to return to the ſubject : la Pompadour though ſhe looks down upon her huſband d'Eſtiolles as comparatively a little creature honored with her concern about him, and in fact treats him with all that air of protection and ſuperiority, yet ſuch is the power of a huſband's prerogative, that it has been penetrated that in ſecret ſhe is not without anxiety for its ever coming into his power to re-claim it. Though ſhe does not ſee him, out of reſpect to the King, ſhe writes to him in the ſtyle of a powerfull friend afraid of an inferior, and gets for him every thing he aſks or that is conſiſtent with the meaſures ſhe thinks herſelf obliged to keep with the royal favor. On his part, thoroughly detached

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But to return to the ſubject : la Pompadour though ſhe looks down upon her huſband d'Eſtiolles as comparatively a little creature honored with her concern about him, and in fact treats him with all that air of protection and ſuperiority, yet ſuch is the power of a huſband's prerogative, that it has been penetrated that in ſecret ſhe is not without anxiety for its ever coming into his power to re-claim it. Though ſhe does not ſee him, out of reſpect to the King, ſhe writes to him in the ſtyle of a powerfull friend afraid of an inferior, and gets for him every thing he aſks or that is conſiſtent with the meaſures ſhe thinks herſelf obliged to keep with the royal favor. On his part, thoroughly detached

from her, he ſpeaks ſlightingly enough of her to perſons of his confidence. He knows her thoroughly, and no longer blinded to her faults by his love, he only remembers her ingratitude and her artifices of which he could, if he would, give a pretty numerous catalogue.

The public judging impartially between them, pronounces without heſitation, that it was only for a mind ſo thoroughly infected with falſe ambition and vanity as her's, not to ſee that even the ſucceſs of her premeditated deſigns upon the king, in wrong of an indulgent huſband, herſelf in the boſom of affluence, was a very untriumphable one; that it was rather but a wretched bargain to

her; an exchange, to her irreparable damage, of the tranquillity of innocence for the diſquiet of guilt, of honor for infamy, ſince ſhe was doubtleſs more truly reſpectable in the character of wife to d'Eſtiolles than in that of miſtreſs to a King, whom ſhe had not even the excuſe of loving.

Certainly then, if ſhe was not too well aſſured before-hand of the King's weakneſs for her, it muſt be with the worſt grace imaginable, that ſhe could, with all her artifice, found ſo high thoſe ſacrifices to him of her gratitude, duty and fame, that muſt have coſt her ſo little, ſince ſhe had of herſelf fore-laid them. Or if they were ſacrifices at all,

they were, at leaſt, evidently made not to his paſſion, but to her own predominant ones of vanity, intereſt and others of the like nature, of which Love could never be of the number, who never but diſdains to be joint-tenant with them in the ſame heart, or even to admit them to hold under him. No! the Love that can ſerve them or with them, can be nothing but an impoſtor, and that a rank one.

On this occaſion however a reflection riſes too naturally here not to be pardoned the admiſſion. Here was a wife openly torn from the arms of a huſband diſtractedly fond of her, and kept in defiance of him; conſequently his

porperty violated in the moſt ſacred and tender point. No redreſs for him but arbitrary puniſhment for daring to aſſert his right; no reſource but that of a paſſive acquieſcence. After this inſtance, and many more of the moſt grievous oppreſſion might be produced from french hiſtory, muſt it not appear extreamly pleaſant to an engliſhman to hear the ſubjects of that nation denying the exiſtence of their deſpotic government, when reproached with it, for a reproach they admit it to be, and what is ſtranger yet, naturally and with all the ſimplicity of ſelf-perſuaſion, inveighing againſt deſpotiſm, without ſeeming to know or dream that they themſelves are crouching under the compleateſt form of it in the known world?

Their Courts of juſtice, their forms of procedure, their appearances of Laws and Magiſtracy are evidently all nothing but the maſks of that Arbitrary Power, the face of which they hide, only to make that Power the more ſecure and permanent. The bulk of the People, rarely any where penetrating beneath the ſurface of things, does not ſee, though it is ſure, at times, to feel the fangs of that monſter deſpotiſm lurking behind all that dazzling pomp of Order and State; a tiranny politically mitigated, reduced, in ſhort, into ſyſtem, and only the more deteſtable for the being ſo. How much preferable is the franker, honeſter barbariſm of a Turkiſh Government; diſdaining all thoſe re-

finements of artfull Policy, in which alone, the Grand-Signior at Verſailles differs from the Grand-Signior in his ſeraglio at Conſtantinople? What pity would not be due from humanity to the French if their native ſlaviſhneſs of heart did not ſink them beneath it? Yet that the very Court which has forged for the people, thoſe chains ſurely not the leſs chains for the nicety of their make or the glare of their poliſh, is in ſome meaſure ſenſible of their miſery, may be inferred from it's conſtant endeavours to procure them that cruel conſolation the miſerable find in having numbers ſhare their wretched fate, as if too that could leſſen the ſhame of it. This may

at leaſt be one of the reaſons to be given for the rage, in that Court, of propagating ſlavery by every art of conqueſt and extenſion of dominion, in the preſumption of a readineſs in other countries to receive thoſe its chains, from its having already tried them with ſuch ſucceſs on ſubjects that ſeem born for them, are vain and fond of them, and moſt certainly deſerve, ſince they can ſo gaily endure them.

In the mean time La Pompadour continues reigning triumphant in plenitude of power, and what is more, the duration of it ſeems to be enſured by that very circumſtance which made ſo many beſpeak the decline of it, the ceſ-

ſation of all ſenſual commerce betweeen the King and her. All the danger to her aſcendant lay in the firſt moments of uncertainty what turn his ſentiments for her would take on the excluſion of that ſo tender a motive of attachment. But that criſis once conquered, there was more to be hoped by her than to be feared from one of his character ſo apt to miſtake the weakneſs of obſtinacy, itſelf a paſſion built on paſſions, for the virtue of firmneſs, that is never but founded upon Reaſon.

She had, in the firſt place, now no longer to apprehend that palling effect of ſatiety, from which love itſelf when at the happieſt, is not always happy.

enough to be exempt, nor always ſure of not feeling, in a leſs or greater degree, thoſe diſguſts of ſatisfied deſire, which almoſt appropriately fall to the ſhare of the Men, and conſtitute, with them, the uſual ingratitude of enjoyment.

She is alſo now much more ſecure aginſt his change toward her from another cauſe, that ſhe had before principally to dread, and which it may not be amiſs to ſpecify ſomewhat at large, as much of her fortune and dependence is connected with it.

In the countries enſlaved to the Roman-catholic ſuperſtition, there are two

periods of life particularly liable to feel the tyranny of it.

The firſt, that of very tender youth indeed, when the mind, before its having gathered firmneſs enough, is from its ſoftneſs and flexibility, apt to take the ſtronger impreſſions of what it is taught to receive as ſacred truths. Some of them doubtleſs are ſo, ſuch as the idea of a ſupream Being, and the pure doctrine of Religion, but theſe awfull certainties are abuſed by the ſophiſtication of them with the moſt ridiculous abſurdites and the groſſeſt nonſenſe, which could not even paſs with children, nor eſpecially keep their hold, in the age of reaſon, unleſs for their having been

originally introduced in ſuch excellent company, of which they are taken as an eſſential part, and from which it thereſore becomes hard to ſeparate them. Theſe early youth embraces with all the fervor, the enthuſiaſm and unexamining ſimplicity of that age. Thence it is, that the convents of both ſexes are peopled with thoſe wretched victims of their own innocent credulity, of which Artifice and Deſign take ſo infamouſly cruel an advantage.

The other period is the decline of life when the weakening powers of it, open nearer and more alarming proſpects of futurity. Theſe bring back with redoubled force all thoſe prejudices of childhood, in which the greateſt falſities hav-

ing paſſed promiſcuouſly involved with the greateſt truths, with no diſtinction but that of the principal ſtreſs being ever laid on the falſities, to ſave or damn, as believed or rejected, ſo many, for want of a manly ſtrength of judgment neceſſary to the garbling of the truths from them, imagine it the ſafeſt to ſwallow all together; as what, at leaſt, can do no harm, if it does no good. The more faith, the more merit, and down they go glib. Idle, ſilly notion! cauſe of ſo much perſeverance in error! as if it could be entirely matter of indifference to a God, who is wiſdom itſelf, whether he is worſhipped in folly or not.

To theſe ſeaſons of the mind's infirmity, ſympathizing with that of the body, in the early and later ſtages of the human exiſtence, may be added one not leſs productive of corporeal and mental weakneſs, and common to all ages of life, the accident of ſickneſs. Theſe ſeaſons are the ſeed and harveſt-times of ſuperſtition, and that this double-weakneſs forms her greateſt ſtrength, is not amiſs proved by her chooſing for her preferable object of conqueſt the female ſex, which ſhe emphatically affects to honor with the diſtinctive epithet of devout.

It may be obſerved, that as to the firſt period, that of tender youth, the ſtation indeed of princes expoſes them,

in it, to the ſtrongeſt efforts of ſuperſtition to get them into her power, from the proſpect of greater protection and advantages, in future, of which her ſucceſs lays the fondation. But then that very ſtation, generaly ſpeaking, defends them afterwards as they grow up, from the gloomy exceſſes of her ſeduction, ſhe herſelf being at the age of ſtrengthened reaſon, ſupplanted by the functions of ſtate, the diſplay of power, and the diſſipations of pleaſure. I have ſaid in general, only, becauſe I am not unaware that there have been, and perhaps are ſome exceptions.

As for example, that of a Prince of our days, who damps the hopes of a whole

people in him, from too great an appearance of the ill effects upon him, of his having been early betrayed and delivered into the mercileſs hands of thoſe poiſonous murtherers of reaſon and common-ſenſe, the Jeſuits and bigots. Should their inhuman intereſted zeal have taken too deep a poſſeſſion of him, the world may, in time, not impoſſibly ſee as declared a ſchiſm break out into action of Janſeniſts and Conſtitutioniſts, as was that of the Calviniſts and Romaniſts, in the ſame nation, of which one would think the people formed to prove, as ſtrongly as ever was proved in any private perſon, that extream Wit is not incompatible with extream Folly.

This firſt period, however, being entirely paſſed with la Pompadour's royal gallant, is entirely out of the preſent queſtion.

As to the other, into the verge of which he is preciſely entering, the danger from it to her power, on the continuance of a commerce more liable to the compunctions of conſcience, in proportion as the fire of youth and its paſſions ſhould ſubſide, was the moſt to be apprehended; kings would be happier than other men in that ſuperior offciouſneſs of their ſpiritual guides, for the ſake of the acceſs that office gives them, to remind them of their duty, if theſe directors, would but honeſtly do theirs by them. But inſtead of drawing their arguments for it

from that pure ſpring, the love of God, ſole origin of all that is good and great in ſpeculative or practical religion, from its inſpiring that beneficence to ſociety, which carries ſo ſtrongly his own divine ſtamp upon the heart of man, they think it more for their intereſt, to inſtill or cultivate in them the fear of the Devil.

Knowing how much greater a force Fear has than Hope, the chief battery they employ, is the religion of their own forgery, preſented under penalty of the torments of the heathen's purgatory, or of the eternal flames of hell. Theſe terrors oftenеſt operate to their wiſh, which is never without ſome deſign in their own favor, and for their own intereſt. No wonder then that

their effects ſhould take the tincture of that ſlaviſh daſtardly paſſion from whence they proceed, and to which the honor of being a hommage to God is ſo falſly attributed whilſt in fact, that hommage is, no other than what is with infinitely more propriety paid openly by the Indian ſavages to the Devil.

Thence thoſe childiſh ſuperſtitions, thoſe ſilly outward ceremonies, thoſe fooleries to which ſo great an efficacy is annexed; thence ſo often, what is worſe yet, thoſe infernal perſecutions of conſciences for the ſake of a God, whoſe peculiar prerogative of dominion over them is thus uſurped, and who cannot but hold in the utmoſt abhorrence

thoſe cruelties which are the work of Weakneſs, practiſed upon by Artifice, and of Power made the tool of Superſtition.

As to the hour of ſickneſs, open for the ſame reaſon of weakneſs, to the ſame inſidiouſneſs, the king had already given a proof of his ſubjection to that dominion of fear, by that diſmiſſion of la Tournelle, whom he had juſt created ducheſs of Chateau-roux, which took place during his illneſs at Metz, and whom, as it were to ſhow, that the reſolution of it was purely owing to the terrors inſpired by that ſituation, he recalled the inſtant that the danger was over. In vain: for he never ſaw

her again, ſhe dying ſuddenly after his meſſage to her, of poiſon as was reported by ſome, and has been before remarked, or of over-joy, as was believed by others.

But as to la Pompadour, ſhe is now well over thoſe flats. Circumſtanced as ſhe is with the King, abſolved in due form for the crime of her paſt commerce with him, and ſafe in the innocence of her preſent one, ſo far as the abſence of mere ſenſuality can make it to be innocent, ſhe has little to fear from the repreſentations of thoſe directors of the royal conſcience, who never let ſlip an occaſion of exerting their ſpiritual authority, if but for the ſake of keeping it up, and to

whom all degrees of right and wrong are ſo equal, that they will with the ſame zeal, inſiſt on baniſhing a King's miſtreſs his preſence, or millions of his innocent, faithful ſubjects his dominions. They owe beſides, a particular grudge to la Pompadour, for her counſel of neutrality between the clergy and parliament; but where can they take their text of objection to a woman who is entitled to her Eaſter-communion?

By this means, however, her power appears greatly confirmed, and it is now generally imagined, that ſhe is projecting a yet more permanent eſtabliſhment of it, by drawing the King in to a mood of mind, to which, in her continual ſtudy

of his inclinations, not to ſay weakneſſes, ſhe could not but diſcover, by fits, a certain propenſity. This is that very bigot-devotion which in her former ſituation muſt have been fatal to her favor, and which in her preſent one, ſhe will probably have the art of converting into the inſtrument of its continuance. Of this deſign ſhe has already given broad indications in her beginning to affect at leaſt as much of that particular ſort and air of prudery which is commonly the prelude to the hoiſting of the ſanctified ſtandard of bigottry, as may not appear too violent and too ſuſpicious an abruption from thoſe pleaſures of the world, with which he has not yet quite done diverting himſelf. Should

ſhe bring that ſcheme to bear, it is not only poſſible that ſhe may get reconciled to the clergy, but very probable that her ſuperior artifice will ſuggeſt to her methods of amuſing him as effectually in that way, in which there are ſo many childiſhneſſes, as in any other, and thus give the world the ſecond volume of Madam Maintenon and that a much duller one, if poſſible, than the firſt.

There ſeems then at preſent, and the reader will pleaſe, once for all, to take notice that this is written in the midſummer of one thouſand ſeven hundred fifty eight, little room for conjecturing that he will ſoon ſnap his leading-ſtrings, or that ſhe will not long continue her

aſcendant, unleſs either ſome of thoſe very meaſures ſhe ſtrains beyond all moderation to keep it, ſhould haſten its deſtruction, and diſſolve the enchantment, or that the conſpiring clamor of his whole people ſhould at length force open his eyes to the injury he is doing to them and to his own honor, in abandoning himſelf to her miſguidance.

The Queen, the Dauphin, the Royal family, who all deteſt her in proportion to their affection for him, all ſee with a grief the more intenſe for their not having the liberty to vent it, a woman ſo ſcandalouſly at the head of his hiſtory, conſtantly betraying the daughter of a

Poiſſon's wife by the mean and ſilly inſolence of her vanity, and the wife of a farmer of the Revenue by her gaunt eagerneſs after money, at the ſame time that no ſtronger proof need be required of her loving nothing in him, but his power to gratify thoſe paſſions, than thoſe paſſions themſelves. Once more, there is no one who knows any thing of love, but muſt know how incompatible with it they are, in their very eſſence. Or could there even be ſuch a thing, in nature, as mercenary love, it muſt, partake ſo much of dirt and meanneſs asto have, like fruits forced by putrid muck at the root, ever a dunghill-taſte.

She has not been content with draining from him an unconſcionable profuſion of grants and gifts, and of making the moſt pernicious advantages of his favor, but, though ſaving enough of her own, kept collaterally urging him to the moſt exorbitant expences, in thoſe pleaſures and amuſements ſhe ſuggeſted to him, or to which ſhe encouraged his natural inclination, inſtead of exerting her effectual influence and control to reſtrain them, as ſhe could not but have done if ſhe had had a real regard for him.

She attends and preſides over all thoſe parties of pleaſure in his frequent journies to Fontainebleau, Marly, St. Ger-

main's, Choiſi, La Meute, which are not only ſo ruinouſly expenſive to himſelf, that the Revenue of the Crown ſtands mortgaged or anticipated for ſeveral years in advance, but to the nobility that accompanies him. A circumſtance very little minded, eſpecially as the diſorder of their private forture makes them more dependent on the court. Deep play, hunting and trifling form the whole circle of diſſipation in thoſe jaunts, and ſtunning all ſerious thought, greatly take off the attention due to the buſineſs of the ſtate, which becomes therefore at the moſt a ſecond and ſubordinate conſideraton. It was in courſe perfunctorily managed, and ſtood committed only to ſuch mi-

niſters as La Pompadour choſe or were agreeable to her. This ſuppoſes no very great dignity or elevation of mind in thoſe who could tamely ſubmit or acquieſce in ſuch a tenure of their places.

The truth is, that ſhe had ſurrounded the king with thoſe little creatures of hers, over whom ſhe could extend her empire, even to their not daring to ſay any thing to him that ſhe had not dictated to them. Thence it was that any truth that interfered with her private views could rarely penetrate to the royal ear; or, at beſt, could be but indirectly ſuggeſted. An inſtance of this laſt did not a little divert the court.

Not long ſince, the King on ſome occaſion went to Paris, which he does very rarely, from an averſion he is ſuppoſed to have taken to it, on his knowing the diſpoſition of that Town towards La Pompadour. The populace gathering, followed his coach, not with the uſual acclamations of *Vive le Roi!* "or long live the King!" but with loud cries of "Bread! Bread!" and this in ſpite of the guards who rebuffed and even threatened the People. At the ſame time they loaded the Queen with a thouſand benedictons.

Incenſed at all this, on his return, to Verſailles, he mentioned it with a mixture of acrimony and concern. One

of La Pompadour's creatures taking it up, ſaid that he wondered at the peoble's unreaſonableneſs; that they were wantonly crying famine over a heap of corn, for that to his knowledge the quartern-loaf was ſold at ſome low price that he mentioned. The honeſt Marquſs de Souvré, the hero of the elbow-chair-ſtory in the firſt part of this work. could not with any patience hear ſo groſs an impoſition, and taking up his hat and gloves, made as if he was going out in a hurry. The King calling to him aſked him the reaſon. "Only "ſays he, may it pleaſe your majeſty, "that I may go this inſtant and have "that rogue of a ſteward of mine "hanged, for his charging me double

" the price for my bread, of what that " worthy gentleman aſſures it to be." This ſet the whole preſence a laughing, but does not ſeem to have ſet the King a thinking.

It has been ſhown how diſguſtingly diſqualified La Pompadour is for being the King's miſtreſs in one ſenſe, and how undeſeving of it in almoſt every other; but ſhe ſtill makes a worſe figure, if poſſible, in her character of a ſtateswoman. Little artifices and petty paſſions could never make a great miniſter. Yet ſhe aſpired ſtill higher and aſſumed all the authority of a deſpotic miſtreſs, that gave what motion ſhe pleaſed to the State-machine. Mean-ſpirited councels

naturally enough coming from her, and not the leſs followed for their being ſo; Miniſters diſgraced, Generals recalled at her imperious nod, and all of theſe for the worſt, ſignalized her power and her want of judgment.

In the mean time, this ſubverſion of all order and dignity threw a general languor into the adminiſtration of affairs. The ſubjects of the greateſt rank, merit and abilities, were either driven into corners, or voluntarily ſhrank from the indignity of places that could only be held on the ſcandalous terms of paying court to a woman, conſtantly jealous of not having enough of that reſpect ſhown her, to which ſhe muſt be conſcious of

having ſo little title, and but the more intent on hiding that meanneſs of her's, by an inſolence ſo much fitter to prove and expoſe it. The conſequence of this muſt be the filling of the places thus vacant with petty characters, whoſe greateſt merit could only be the having none, as no merit could there exiſt, but what muſt be incompatible with a ſubmiſſion to her, or with ſub-miniſtring to the will and meaſures of a woman that viſibly ſacrificed to her own private paſſions, the king who was governed and the kingdom that was diſhonored by her.

Nor did this deadly blaſt of all ardor, and emulation for the ſervice of the public, but run through all orders from the

higheſt to the loweſt. Numbers of tha nation in that enthuſiaſm of theirs for the glory of their King, which would have ſo much more noble a ſpring in the love of their country, and in the cauſe of their own liberty that would be included in it, would even ſacrifice their lives to the hopes of obtaining the royal favor. But even theſe, on ſuppoſing them any ſentiments of honor, could not be but very indifferent to that favor, if only to be had through a la Pompadour. The moſt gracious gift, the moſt merited rewards muſt come greatly lowered in value, through ſo foul a channel. She can procure nothing from the king honorable to any one, but his diſgrace.

It cannot however be imagined, that all this diſorder and the extenſively per-

nicious conſequences of it, which will make ſuch a figure in the hiſtory of France, ſhould not breed a general fermentation. The public execration of her is actually riſen to ſuch a pitch of rage, that ſhould any viſitation of a plague or famine ſupervene, it would be currently imputed to la Pompadour. There is even now no ſaying to what extremities the general diſſatisfaction might not be carried. That ſomething of this nature is not but apprehended, appears from her rarely ſtirring abroad without an eſcort of a hundred and fifty, or two hundred horſe.

In the mean time towards ſuppreſſing the more than murmurs at the actual ſyſtem of things, the court has had re-

courſe to that moſt deſpicably wretched of all the expedients of deſpotiſm, the forbidding of all orders of the people on penalty of the Baſtile, or other impriſonment, to talk of ſtate affairs. The coffee-houſes and all the public places of reſort, ſwarm with the licenſed ſpies of the government. A meaſure this that only drives the diſcontent, ſeeking evaporation at the mouth, with ten-fold violence back to the heart, which it lies burſting, till the firſt opportunity, it can ſnatch from the oppreſſion of arbitrary power, of breaking out into the moſt furious demonſtrations. But where this tyrannical edict of ſilence has a further meaning to conceal from the people that ill ſtate of things brought on by that very miſ-government of which they are

debarred the liberty of complaining, it has no other effect, but that for one evil, it may for awhile keep from their knowledge, but never from their doubt, it gives them room to preſume a thouſand.

But if the cries from within are thus ſtifled or attempted to be ſtifled, the violence of conjunctures from without, has not but at length operated ſome alterations favorable to the wiſhes of that nation. One of theſe is the lately calling up the marſhal d'Etrées, and his father-in-law, the marqueſs de Puiſieux, to the council, notwithſtanding the known indiſpoſition of La Pompadour to them. But in ſuch exigencies of ſtate, even malice and envy themſelves muſt ſhrink up to the wall, to make way for merit

ſo ſuperior and ſo neceſſary. La Pompadour true to her uſual art, ſubmitted with as good a grace as ſhe could to what ſhe ſaw ſhe could not help. Poſſibly now the freqent expenſive journies to ſome of the pleaſure-ſeats may be ſuſpended, from the more honeſt repreſentations of thoſe miniſters, ſeconded by the bad ſtate of the finances. The œconomy of the royal houſe-hold is already undergoing an actual reform.

The urgency of the times, in ſhort, ſeems at preſent to prevail over the turn to expenſiveneſs ſo ſtrongly ſuggeſted or cheriſhed by la Pompadour. Beſides, follies have not always the privilege of laſting. But, with her cunning, there could be no doubt of her quickly veering

to the wind that blew, nor even of her anticipating the change from obſerving the drift of the clouds on the horizon.

There is no point however ſhe gives up, of which ſhe does not make all the merit that can be made of her giving it up. She will even affectedly exagerate her natural taſte for profuſeneſs, or at leaſt, for promoting it, purely to make her ſacrifice of it, do her the greater honor with the king whom, with an art not, it ſeems, the leſs ſucceſsful for its being ſo ſtale and trite, ſhe leads by appearing to be herſelf led by him. Thus with a flexibility that gains her all her ends, ſhe adapts herſelf to all his moods and

turns of temper, like the creeping plants that, as they climb, follow and humor the bent of the tree they wind round and prey upon.

Thence it is that hitherto there appears no abatement of her favor with him. He has had no attachments ſince that ſcarcely declared one of his to the young Murhpy. Perhaps he may have had ſome tranſient gallantries, or may have returned by fits to his *grizettes*, but neither is this very certain, nor of any conſequence to her.

Having brought the hiſtory of la Pompadour down to the preſent inſtant, and neceſſarily leaving the reſt of it to be,

furniſhed by future time and events, there now only remains for the ſatisfaction of the reader's curioſitiy, to give ſome diſcription of her perſon. In order to this, it will hardly be thought improper to diſtinguiſh times. The one, when in her full powers of beauty, ſhe made a conqueſt of the king, about fifteen years ago, for ſo long ſhe has reigned; the other, the preſent one.

She might be about three and twenty, when ſhe at length, accompliſhed what ſhe had ſo long been laying out for, and what her mother and herſelf had often openly declared to be her aim, the getting to be the King's miſtreſs. Her complexion was naturally very fair, with

eyes full of fire and meaning, of which the great life they gave to her face, was not unpleaſingly tempered with a certain air of languor and tenderneſs it received from a conſtitution rather inclined to ſicklineſs, of which the paliſh hue of her lips was another ſign, and ſuch an one as could not give the imagination very favorable prepoſſeſſions. Neither did ſhe towards heightening her color, or rather towards ſupplying the deficiency of it, diſdain the aſſiſtence of a ſlight tinge of artificial red, though no more than amounted to juſt a ſuſpicion. Her features were all perfectly delicate; her hair of the cheſnut color, her ſtature of a middling ſize, and her ſhape irreproachable. Nothing, in fact,

could more beautifully taper into ſlenderneſs of waiſt. Conſcious of this, and never negligent of any art that could improve any advantage ſhe had, ſhe invented, for an undreſs, a gown that came into faſhion under the name of *Robe-à-la Pompadour*, made ſomewhat in the ſtyle of a Turkiſh veſt, buttoning at the collar and wriſts, which well-adapted to the riſe of the boſom, and gathering cloſe round the waiſt, marks the ſhape, with the more grace and effect, for its appearance, at the firſt glance, of being rather meant to conceal it.

There was great ſprightlineſs and vivacity diffuſed throughout her perſon,

and animated her every look and geſture, perhaps in too great a degree, ſince it might contribute to her being remarkable for a bold forward air, and a way of preſenting herſelf that ever ſeemed as much as to ſay pertly "here am I." Upon the whole however ſhe was generally allowed to be one of the handſomeſt and the moſt agreeable women, at that time, in Paris.

At preſent, (one thouſand ſeven hundred fifty eight) that ſhe may be about thirty eight years of age, it is hard to ſay what her face may be under a layer inch-deep of red and white. It may be preſumed ſhe has her reaſons for falling in with that faſhion of the ladies of the

French Court which equally concealing a bad or a good complexion, for they almoſt all uſe it, breeds ſuch a ridiculous ſameneſs that there is hardly any diſtinguiſhing one face from another no more than in a flock of ſheep; at the ſame time that the red or vermillion is ſo glaringly predominant, that they might be taken for ſo many figure-dancers maſked for executing a dance of Furies. One would, in ſhort, imagine that not ſatisfied with being chaſte in themſelves, they ſought to be the cauſe of chaſtity in others, from that otherwiſe unaccountable rage they have of daubing themſelves in ſo coarſe and unnatural a way, as to deſtroy all effect of their features, and every deſire in the men, but that

of having nothing to ſay to them. La Pompadour's face, being by this means out of the queſtion, there remains but to obſerve, that beſides the change eaſily to be imagined that years may have made in her perſon, her diſorder has reduced her to ſo frightful a ſtate of leanneſs, that it is but juſt all bodily appetite towards her ſhould ceaſe, ſince it muſt ſtarve on the little ſubſtance it would find in her, being almoſt as diſ-incumbered from fleſh, as impalpable, as eluſive of the embrace as one of the infernal ſhades, beckoning the ferry-boat, on the banks of the Stygian Lake. Combine with the idea of this painted ſepulchral figure, another that is not amiſs ſymbolized

by it, that of the maſk of artifice over all her hollowneſs of heart, and you have pretty juſtly before you, in body and in ſpirit, amidſt all the ſurrounding glare of greatneſs, wealth, and a King's favor, that object of pity and contempt, the preſent la Pompadour.

FINIS.

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